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Title:

Advertisement writing

Place:

[London]

Date:

1927

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"A copywriter's bookshelf": p. 242-244.

1. Advertising. I. Title.

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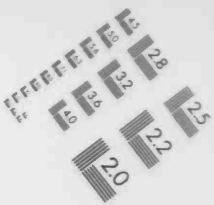
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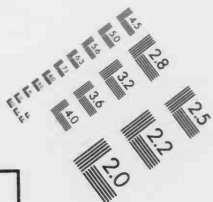


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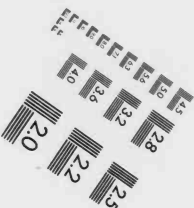
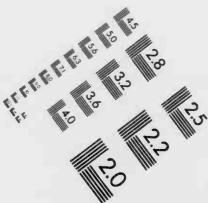
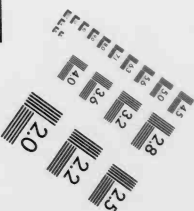
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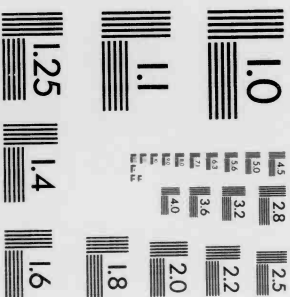
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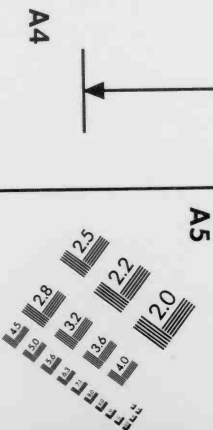
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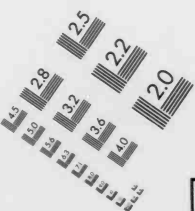
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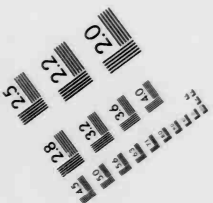
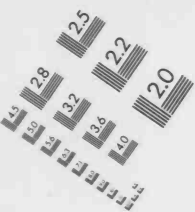
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St. Paul, MN 55119

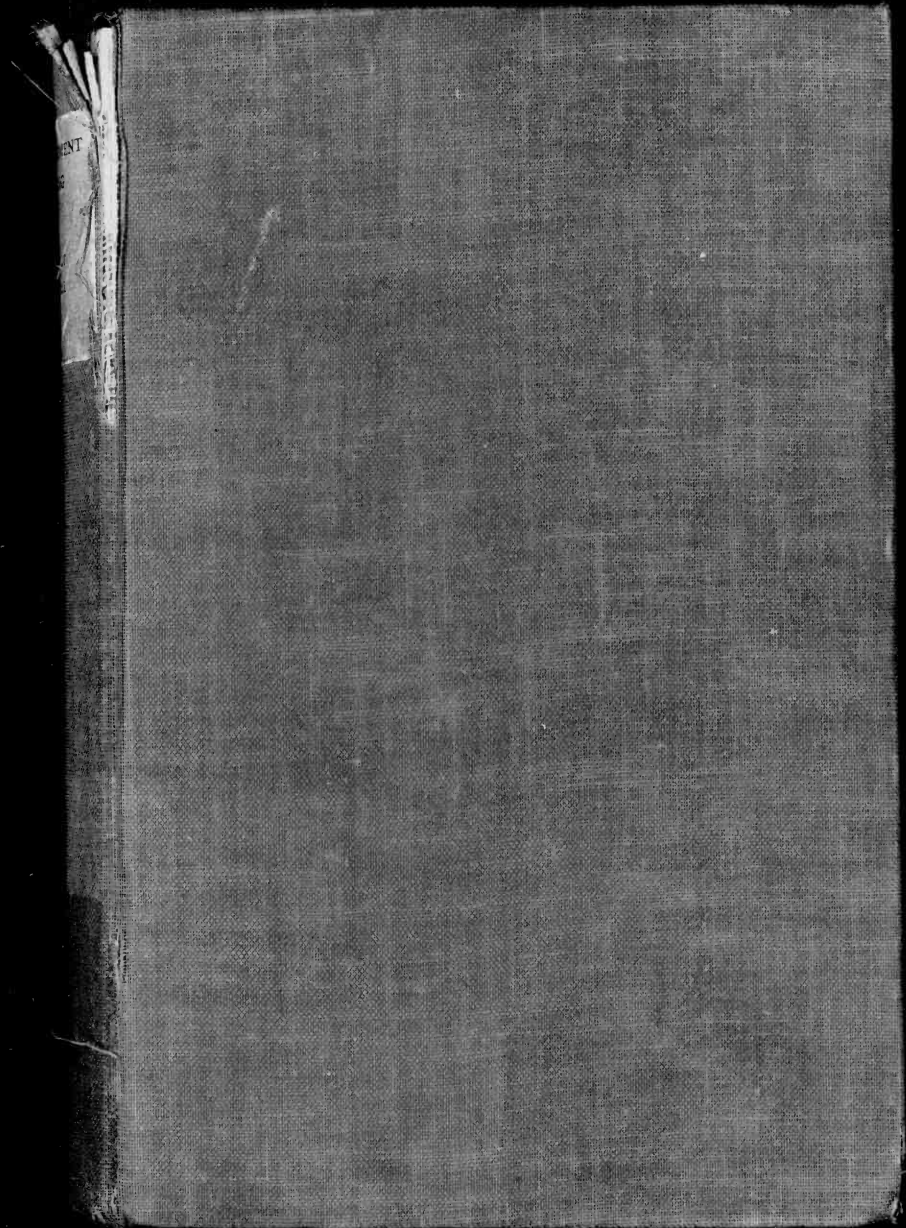
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SERIES

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ADVERTISEMENT WRITING

BY

GILBERT RUSSELL

*Ernest Benn Ltd
Bouverie House
Fleet St
1927*

Bus.
30-1006
Replac

D253
R914

Made & Printed in Great Britain by
Morrison & Gibb Ltd.
Edinburgh

Aug 15, 1930 DA

Two passages in this book originally appeared in *Twentieth Century Advertising* and *The Advertising World*. I am indebted to the proprietors for permission to reproduce them here.

G. R.

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INTRODUCTION

SOME DEFINITIONS

THE still widely held belief that successful advertising depends upon artistic inspiration or happy intuition is silly and mischievous. It produces poor advertisements. Advertising is not an art, nor is it a science. It is a commercial operation. It has certain settled principles. It is as technical as banking. Yet it is frequently discussed and even employed as if it had no scientific basis whatever.

This occurs when advertising is regarded as something apart from the day-to-day routine of business.

Advertising is only a part of a much larger commercial operation—marketing. And it would be preferable if advertising were never regarded as a separate function at all.

“Marketing” is organised and co-ordinated selling effort. That is to say, it is salesmanship which has an orderly structure, because it proceeds according to a deliberate plan. In this plan the several parts of salesmanship have been brought into proper relation. Marketing is the whole plan.

Throughout this book the situation dealt with usually assumes a completely manufactured

article. Many of the principles suggested could be equally applied by a manufacturer of a raw or semi-manufactured material. But advertisements are mainly employed to assist the sale of finished productions, and it has been convenient to discuss the whole question from this point of view.

WHERE MARKETING BEGINS

Production ceases when the article in question has been completely finished and is ready to be given some means of identification. Marketing considerations may very possibly enter into certain details of production too. But marketing really begins the moment questions of a suitable name or trade-mark or label (and the equivalents of a label, package, wrapper, etc.) arise. The selection of a suitable name or trade-mark and of an attractive label or package must be influenced by public preferences in such matters. This does not mean that the design of a package need be devoid of taste. A name ought to be easy to pronounce, so as to be easy to remember. A label or package needs to have attractiveness, and it may be an advantage for it to be designed so that it will stand out prominently upon a shopkeeper's shelves. All these considerations are connected with advertising. Advertising is

a part of marketing. Therefore these are also the concern of marketing.

Marketing, I repeat, is the whole plan of organised selling. Within this plan are advertising and merchandising.

Advertising disseminates information about merchandise for the purpose of influencing the public mind. It was thought at first that it would have made for clarity in this book if the word "advertisement" could have meant a series of advertisements and "advertising" a scheme including advertisements. This idea was, indeed, experimented with; but it caused such awkwardness of expression that it actually became confusing and had to be abandoned.

"Merchandising" is a word frequently used, and one which frequently means different things to different people. In the pages that follow, advertising means advertisements in newspapers, periodicals, technical papers and trade papers, and printed matter. And merchandising material means booklets and printed matter and forms letters distributed to the retail trade for redistribution to the public. It also means shop-window displays, show-cards, window-bills, and so forth—anything which assists the retail shopkeeper to sell the goods in question.

EXPLANATION OF SEEMINGLY IRRELEVANT
CHAPTERS

Some explanation seems to be needed of the plan and scope of what follows. This book is intended both for manufacturers and copywriters. The early chapters seem justified on both grounds. They may speak for themselves as regards manufacturers; it is hoped not with discourtesy. So far as copywriters are concerned, something may usefully be said.

These early chapters (Chapters I., II., and III.) are really a justification of advertising. They are necessary in my view, because I am unwilling that any one should adopt copywriting as a daily task unless he or she believes advertising to be a useful work and one which is beneficial to the community. Advertising is economically and socially justified. It is necessary to understand and to believe this before taking up the work of advertisement writing. A man needs to know it in order to be happy in his work. That is reason enough. He also needs to know it in order to do good work. Effective copy must have conviction in it. It must express genuine and sincere belief. A man who takes up advertisement writing believing that any lie may be told because what he is writing is "only an advertisement" is a nuisance to himself, and to everybody else. Skill

in writing may for a time cover up his private contempt for the work he is doing. But no one wants to work in such conditions, and any one who does thus work will sooner or later cease to produce good work—and a good thing, too. The sooner he leaves advertisement writing the better for advertising.

Advertisement writing needs to be taken seriously. It is a career. It should be entered upon in that belief. It is too difficult, and requires too much perseverance and patience to be regarded otherwise. Copywriting is an art in itself. It is not a side-line. It is not a job that any one, however skilled in the art of writing, can do without training. Skill in the art of writing will help: but there is an art of copywriting distinct from this. And it is one that takes some mastering. There is plenty to interest any one in the mastering of it and reward to be gained therefrom—not merely financial reward. The man who takes up advertisement writing may look forward to years full of satisfaction and a decent living as well. And if he can produce copy of character and originality, he may expect to rise rapidly. Recognition comes quickly to any one of real ability.

Mainly, the plan of this book divides the work of the copywriter into two broad sections. Chapters I. to IX. deal with the practice of

advertisement writing. Chapters X. and XI. deal with the man himself.¹

I do not think that the subject of advertisement writing is forgotten in any chapter: personal prejudice has probably ensured that, apart from other reasons.

PRINCIPLES RATHER THAN DETAILED ANALYSIS

It will be noticed that no reproductions of displayed advertisements accompany the text. The reason is that fashions in advertisements change. This book is not concerned with fashions either in display or copy. It is concerned mainly with principles, which do not alter much.

Nor is there any separate detailed treatment of copy for booklets or for mail order advertisements. In my view, the principles of advertisement writing remain the same, broadly speaking, whatever form the advertisement assumes. A man may write better booklets than he does press advertisements. If he does, it is because his ability is incomplete. If he knows the principles, practice ought to complete his ability.

This book does not pretend to be a detailed analytical discussion of the subject. It will not

¹ Throughout, for the sake of brevity, the term "man" embraces woman.

tell you about every kind of advertisement copy. It will only tell you about some kinds. If it described them all, it would have to present the advantages and disadvantages of all and leave you to judge for yourself. It has seemed preferable not to attempt this, but to put forward a personal point of view, and to leave you to do plenty of thinking on your own account. Of all work, copywriting does demand that a man shall think for himself. No one can do his thinking for him. Hence if you are inexperienced in advertisement writing you cannot learn how to write copy from the study of other people's advertisements any more than you can learn how to write books from reading other people's books, or learn how to play the piano from listening to some one else playing. Supposing, for argument's sake, that by applying unusual intelligence you were able to learn everything that it could teach you from studying other people's copy, what would you have learned? You would have learned how to write advertisements very like some one else's. That is precisely what you should wish to avoid. You don't want to be a copyist. You want your work as a copywriter to have character of its own.

An experienced copywriter can derive much interest and some additional knowledge of his craft from studying other people's copy. But that

is because his knowledge enables him to reject what is bad and admire what is good. Having no such knowledge, the inexperienced man will frequently admire meretricious balderdash and pass over sound work. Apart from these considerations, there are not enough well-written advertisements to form a course of study. If other advertisements are to be studied, you should have an experienced man at your elbow to expound the specimens selected.

COPYWRITERS BORN RATHER THAN MADE

It is my belief, founded on fourteen years' work in advertising, that copywriters are born and not made. But men are not born with a complete equipment for writing advertisements any more than they are born with a complete equipment for doing anything else. They need training. They can learn the technique, just as a painter can acquire skill in the technique of painting. But technical skill does not make a painter an artist. Nor does technical skill make a writer a copywriter. Ideas are what count. Ideas and an insatiable interest. And you cannot teach a man how to produce ideas or how to be interested in people and things. You can only teach him which are the usable ideas, and why they are usable. In time, under training, such a man will probably

become a copywriter, always provided he can express ideas in writing and is of more than average intelligence.

The ignorance of the average man who knows nothing more about advertising than what he sees in the newspapers is vast. The ignorance even of business men, trained in other respects, but similarly placed, is almost equally as vast.

People outside the business of advertising (which, as has been explained is a small part of a complicated piece of machinery called marketing) often do not even understand what it is that an advertisement must do.

In some way or another an advertisement must sell merchandise. The means employed are the subject of this book. For the moment let us look at this task in the simplest manner.

An advertisement must be so designed that, at a glance, it provokes favourable interest. The copy must increase that interest, never letting it wander. Then it must make the reader want the article advertised so actively that he or she will, if necessary, go to some trouble to procure it. This is putting the thing in its most elementary form. Even so, if it sounds easy to do, take it from me that it is nothing of the kind. The writing of an advertisement which will sell goods is a highly technical and exceedingly difficult

piece of work. This will be obvious by the time you have read half this book.

ADVERTISEMENT COPY IS ROOTED IN HUMAN NATURE

It ought to be plain even to the inexperienced that successful copywriting depends upon insight into people's minds: not into individual minds, mark, but into the way average people think and act, and the way they re-act to suggestions of various kinds.

If you have no knowledge of this, and no gift or instinct in the matter, you will never become a copywriter.

That is really what is meant by the suggestion that copywriters are born and not made. There must be in a man a curiosity, at least, about the way people think. There must be a sympathy which training can develop into understanding. Advertising is becoming increasingly exact every day. Where instinct used to be enough, it is being replaced by inquiry. Advertising men nowadays don't say, "The public will buy this article from such and such a motive": they employ what is called market research to find out the buying motives, as exactly as time and money and opportunity permit, from the public itself. It is remarkable, however, how frequently such market re-

search confirms the view of experienced advertising men. This is not intended to minimise the enormously valuable function of market research, of which there is still far too little. Market research of course does other things, far more complicated things, which no copywriter could attempt.

Unless this sympathy exists, so that it *can* be trained and developed into understanding, good copy cannot be expected. In addition to this, there must be alertness of mind and a keen sense of opportunity. There must be a quick grasp of those essentials which will make a striking appeal.

And so we come back to people's minds. As a copywriter you are concerned with facts. You have a mass of facts, usually, to draw upon. You must learn to know which of those facts will make attractive selling points, which to reject as likely to be uninteresting to most people. You are, I say, concerned with facts. But you must be able to present those facts in an interesting and active way. Consequently, in selecting and rejecting from your available facts, you must have your public in mind. So you must know your public, and sympathise with your public. You must know how your public lives and thinks. You must understand its fears and hopes and ambitions and disappointments. You must know its courage, its struggles, its failings. And your public is far

larger than the following of almost any novelist. On the one hand, there is the wife in the narrow street who fights with fine courage against nearly overwhelming odds to keep her house spotless, her children clean and clothed—most difficult of all, her husband contented. It will need stirring phrases to capture this woman's attention and convince her that what you have to sell is worth money from her meagre housekeeping allowance.

At the other end of the scale, you have the drifting, restless people to whom money comes plentifully. You must understand their hopes and ambitions and fears, their struggles and failings. To the extent that they are better educated, your task may be easier here than with the poor. But remember that, for the most part, they have a cynical disregard for you and your calling. They don't believe advertisements. They are impatient of the rubbish to be found in many of them, and apt to judge all advertisements by the few that tell lies about pills and cough cures. It needs writing of a high order to convince these people that you are telling the truth.

ADVERTISEMENT WRITING

CHAPTER I

THE PLACE OF ADVERTISING IN MODERN LIFE

WHETHER people do enjoy fuller, happier, healthier, freer lives in the conditions of modern civilisation than they enjoyed in any former generation is a question which must be decided by individual judgment. Personally, I have no doubt of it. I think history proves it conclusively. But what I shall attempt to show is that, whatever the limitations of modern life may be, advertising, at all events, is one of its outgrowths which does contribute materially to the social welfare of the community.

Modern advertising does not extend much further back than thirty years. Certainly little was done before that time to cure it of its admitted evils. But very much has been done since, and it is a calamity, not to the men engaged in it, but from a larger point of view, that so many people should still base their judgment of advertising upon what it used to be, overlooking almost entirely what it has become. The fact that a few advertisement methods still employed savour of the pre-modern period in their

blatancy and deception ought not to blind the intelligent to the fact that these methods are exceptional, and that, in the main, advertising to-day is an influence for good. The professions of medicine and law are not generally damned because there are a few scoundrelly doctors and a few unscrupulous solicitors. Neither ought the business of advertising to be condemned because there are a few dishonest advertisers. It is idle to deny, however, that advertising certainly is thus condemned by a far larger proportion of the educated public than one likes to admit. And this being so, is it not well to face the fact plainly and show that, for the most part, this condemnation is unjustified?

The fact that no newspaper, as we know it to-day, could exist without the revenue derived from advertisements is a fact which may be conveniently discussed before turning to the benefits of advertising itself. An advertising man, from a business point of view, has no politics. His judgment of newspapers and periodicals must be based upon their capacity to produce results for the advertisers for whom he works. Even from a purely business point of view, he is aware that, other things being equal, the paper held in highest esteem by its readers will usually produce the largest results. Editorial influence is reflected in the advertisement

columns. However, this influence is no indication, very often, that the newspaper in question is conducted in the public interest. The popular newspaper, with its stunts, its ramps, its suppression and manipulation of news to suit the temporary views of the proprietorship, its persistent presentation of the sensational, its glaring broadsides, its trumping up of scandals, murders, and of every item of news which can be twisted so as to deal with violence to the body or the mind is a fairly loathsome spectacle, and I have no desire to do otherwise than condemn it. But, admitting all these abuses, I suppose it is beyond question that, on balance, the modern newspaper is an institution which could not advisedly be dispensed with. A little reflection upon what modern conditions would be like if no newspapers existed is convincing evidence of this. Newspapers prevent an enormous amount of corruption. They provide (all things considered) a magnificent news-service. They convey invaluable information. They reduce crime and assist its detection. They defend the helpless, expose the dishonest, help the oppressed, direct money into worthy channels, and in a hundred ways serve the public interest. And if, on balance, the power of the Press is an influence for good, and I do not think there can be any doubt about this, then modern advertising, which keeps the Press

alive, must have some of the credit. If blame must also be apportioned, there is this to be said: though abuses exist, advertisers have done a great deal to purify that part of the Press over which they have direct control. There is less to be condemned in the advertisement than in the editorial columns of the Press. Advertising itself has been a consciously directed force for good mainly since the establishment of the modern service advertising agencies. They, more than any one else, have brought advertising to its present stage of development; they, more than any one else, are entitled to the credit for advertising to-day being a more honest, a more powerful, and a more widely used implement in the sale and distribution of reputable merchandise than ever before.

With these preliminaries let us come to the direct effects of advertising upon the life of the community.

Who pays for advertising? A whole book has been written upon the thesis that advertising is paid for by the firms that fail to use it.¹ A simpler explanation than that is preferred here. In the same way that all the costs of doing business are paid for by the business itself, advertising is "paid for" by the business which employs it.

¹ "Advertising and Progress," by E. S. Hole and John Hart (*Review of Reviews*).

The question is often asked, however, with the intention of showing that advertising is a charge upon the public; that since some firms spend thousands upon advertising, and some appear to get along without spending anything upon it, the cost of this expensive activity must be added to the selling price of the articles thus advertised. This is a fallacy which does not bear a moment's examination. Selfridge's magnificently dressed shop windows in Oxford Street must cost a good deal of money. But does any one suggest that every article sold in Selfridge's is more expensive than it need be because a proportion of the cost of those windows must be added to the selling price of it? If so, will it then be suggested that if Selfridge & Co. Ltd. occupied premises on the Essex Marshes (where rents are presumably lower) with blinds over any windows which a misguided builder had provided, all the goods sold by the firm would in consequence be cheaper than they are now? This does not appear probable. Precisely the same argument applies, with even greater force, to advertising. It is a fallacy to suppose that an article, once made, may thereupon have its selling price fixed upon the cost of manufacture. It cannot. It is easy to see that in fixing the manufacturing cost a number of operations must be considered: plant (*i.e.* a proportion of the cost, upkeep, and depreciation

of the machines used to make the article), the wages of the workpeople employed in making it, rent, insurance, rates, taxes, and so forth—all these, and more, must be considered in arriving at the cost of manufacturing any article.

It is also easy to see that if by any economical process an increased output of workpeople and machines can be absorbed, the result will show a proportionate reduction in the unit manufacturing cost. For while the factory produces goods in increased volume, rent, insurance, rates, and probably even management cost, to a large extent, will remain stationary. What many people seem to overlook, and won't bother to think out for themselves, is that you cannot take a manufacturing cost, add say, 10 per cent. for profit, and expect to sell the article profitably. It is often assumed that this is exactly what you can do. It is assumed that once an article is made and its cost of manufacture determined, the public is clamouring to be allowed to buy it. In other words, many people overlook entirely that it costs something to *sell* an article, and that this cost of selling must also be considered before the article's price can be fixed, so as to show a reasonable profit to the manufacturer.

This cost of selling is very often greater than the cost of manufacture.

What is the cost of selling? Why does it cost

anything to sell an article? Suppose you take a finished article at the completion of manufacture. Obviously that article must be distributed to various points where it is accessible to the public. In other words, it must be distributed to various wholesale houses. And they will expect a margin of profit for themselves for handling the article.

The wholesale house, then, has to employ travelling salesmen up and down the country to call upon retail shopkeepers, whom they persuade, in their turn, to handle the article. These travelling salesmen have to be paid wages and expenses, and the retail shopkeepers expect a margin of profit for themselves too. And this retail profit alone is often 50 per cent. above the wholesale price of the article.¹ In between these various stages there are other costs to be added: transport, management, labour, packing, rent, insurance, rates, and taxes on the sales office, and so forth.

Now it was said just now that any economical process which permitted increased output would obviously reduce the unit cost of production. For instance, a new factory machine might cost

¹ Even then, let it be noted, the article in question has not been "sold"; it has only been distributed. The public must still be persuaded to go in and buy. This will be news to many sales managers.

some thousands of pounds to instal. But it would pay for itself if it increased production economically and lowered the unit cost of manufacture, always provided that the increased production could be absorbed. It is just as obvious that any process which makes it possible to sell an article in greater quantity economically must reduce the cost of selling that article and hence make it possible to sell the article at a reduced price.

This is what advertising does, and is the effect which advertising has on the cost of commodities. Like the machine which may cost thousands, but still lowers the cost of manufacture, so advertising may cost thousands, but still lowers the cost of selling, and therefore the ultimate price to the consumer.

It is just as easy to see *how* this is done. Advertisements explain the advantages of the article to wholesale houses. If the statements made appear reasonable, and the article appears likely to command a ready sale, the wholesale houses are persuaded to take it up. Advertisements explain the advantages of the article to retail shopkeepers. Thus, when the traveller calls upon the shopkeeper, some of his work is already done for him. The shopkeeper is already informed about the article, and the traveller does not have to spend so much time in explanation. In other words, every traveller sells more goods in less

time than if he had to remain with every shopkeeper to explain *all* the advantages of the article in question and to persuade him that it would be worth his while to stock it. Advertisements, again, explain the advantages of the article to the public at large. Thus the shopkeepers, thousands of them, are assisted in selling the article over the counter.

In actual practice other considerations than these enter into the selling process to make advertising the *cheapest known method of selling merchandise*. The employment of advertising directly lowers the cost of selling, and thereby cheapens merchandise, by the effects just described. It does even more than this, however, since by promoting and widening demand and thus ensuring that an increased output will be absorbed, it enables other economies, due to increased production, to be procured in the factory.¹ And when one considers the thousands spent upon renting offices, paying boards of directors, managers, and office staffs, the salaries of travelling salesmen, and the profits allowed to thousands of retail shopkeepers, it is perfectly obvious that expenditure upon advertising, which increases the output of every one of those directors, managers, staffs, travelling salesmen

¹ The economies of mass production are dependent upon large and persistent demand.

and retailers, is an economical and highly productive investment of money.

Advertising is an immense influence in the life of the community. Nor can it be doubted that, in the main, this influence is for good. Pretty well every invention of modern times which is now a practical and commercial possibility has achieved its position by advertisement. This applies both to luxuries and to domestic utilities.

It should not be thought, however, that the whole influence of advertising tends towards the mass production of goods. Much of it does, certainly. Here again, however, few will deny that, on balance, mass production is a progressive tendency. It has already brought an enormous number of articles within reach of people who could never possibly have afforded them otherwise. And your mass-produced article, though it may lack the intimate and lovable marks of the craftsman's fingers, can still have pleasing form and colour and simplicity. It can possess that beauty which nearly always comes from efficiency. It can be contrived by a competent designer.¹

Yet, though advertising does promote the demand which enables things to be made in large quantities, and therefore at prices which humble purses can afford, hundreds of articles are thus made in conditions far removed from mass pro-

¹ The fact that it very rarely is, is another matter.

duction. A Broadwood piano, made by craftsmen whose fathers and grandfathers before them learnt their work at the same benches provides one instance. And it is the influence of advertising, very largely, which enables so fine an instrument to be sold to-day for as little as seventy guineas. In how many thousands of homes is music a cultivating, refining, educative force, as well as a joyous recreation, because advertising has enabled pianos and player-pianos and gramophones to be perfected and put within reach of modest incomes? And not merely put within reach either. Advertising, in this direction, as in others, is a creative influence. Thousands of people have *discovered* music (as they have discovered other blessed things) as a result of reading advertisements descriptive of the happiness and culture to be derived from it.

Nearly all of the miracles of modern life which minister to the comfort and happiness and health of the community have ceased to be miracles and become everyday accompaniments of life very largely as a result of the beneficent influence of advertising. Wireless instruments provide pleasure and instruction for thousands who would be denied them, but for advertising. Such inventions as vacuum-cleaners, fountain-pens, safety-razors, motor-cars, and all kinds of labour-saving devices, are cheap and plentiful where,

without advertising, they would be scarce and dear. The people's food, too, is cleaner and more wholesomely prepared, and available in greater variety, than it would be without the influence of advertising. Tea, cocoa, and oatmeal, for instance, are no longer shovelled out of dusty bins, weighed in insanitary scales, poured into bags blown open by the breath of the shopkeeper, the last crumbs being swept in with scrupulous honesty, if doubtful cleanliness, from off a littered counter: they are packed in hygienic, air-tight containers, as fresh and clean and wholesome as when they left the factory. Food was not sold like this, and could not be, until manufacturers discovered the value of the advertised brand or trade-mark. Nor has the quality of such food ever been so high and so uniform as it is to-day.

In a score of different directions parallel arguments apply. Shoes, furnishing fabrics, clothes, toilet articles, cameras, gas appliances, are better and cheaper than ever before, because advertising makes them so.

The British Commercial Gas Association, to take another example, has done enormous good with its advertising. Cheap lighting and power for factories and in houses, cooking facilities, healthy warmth, have all become more widely used as a result of this association's advertising

of the benefits of gas lighting, gas cooking, and gas fires. Nor do the benefits of this advertising stop here: an enormous increase in material wealth results when coal is converted into gas. Thus hundreds of rich by-products are recovered instead of being wastefully consumed in the form of coal in domestic grates which produce inefficient heat and 75 per cent. of the smoke nuisance! Advertising spreads this knowledge.

In other ways, too, advertising has had a beneficial effect. The present revival of printing received an enormous stimulus from the demands of advertisers for comely printing types and ornaments. Advertising has similarly improved the design of posters, furnishing fabrics, furniture (in some instances), even architecture. There is, indeed, hardly a single activity of our lives that is not affected, for the most part beneficently, by advertising. Advertisements of new issues cause capital to be usefully employed. Advertisement revenue, by providing income for the great transport services, helps to reduce the cost of travel. We are able to shop thriftily because advertisements teach us where to get good value, and how to compare values against each other. We are able to earn high salaries because advertising causes money to be actively employed and to circulate freely. We are encouraged to save money by advertisements which inform us of the

advantages of lending money to the State in return for Savings Certificates. We learn about books (for recreation or for instruction) from publishers' announcements. We are advised to make provision for the future of our dependents as a result of the advertisements of (some of) the insurance companies. It would be tedious to extend the list.

Now no one is so silly as to contend that advertising alone causes these benefits. Of course, money would circulate, and be invested, and saved, travel would be cheap, salaries would be high, people would read and enjoy the blessing of music and the comfort of tasteful surroundings, without the influence of advertising. What is contended is that advertising provides a stimulus. It energises commerce and urges people toward a high standard of living. And advertising assists this high standard to be provided. Who will deny, now, that people do lead fuller, healthier, happier lives in modern conditions than they did formerly? And if they do, then the contention that advertising contributes to our lives is a sound one.

CHAPTER II

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADVERTISING AND MARKETING, AND BETWEEN MARKETING AND BUSINESS

BEFORE advertisement copy can be intelligently discussed, it is necessary to consider the relationship between advertising and marketing. All advertising is merely a part of marketing; and all marketing is merely a part of the day-to-day routine of business. If these two principles are held in view, two refreshing conclusions are the result. They dispose, simultaneously, of two prevalent misconceptions: that advertisements are one of the activities of Fleet Street, and that they depend for success upon the invention of smart catch-phrases. Advertising is a career in itself, not a journalistic side-line. Journalism may be a useful grounding for a man or woman, who intends to seek a future in advertisement writing, though I am disposed to doubt it. It can be no more than a grounding.

Advertisement writing demands an economy of words seldom imposed upon journalists. However, the temptation to pursue this aspect of advertisement writing must be resisted, at all events, until the two principles suggested have been briefly examined.

Advertising is a part of the day-to-day routine of marketing. It is not yet a science, and unlikely ever to become one. It certainly is not an art. Most emphatically it falls far short of being a profession. And, for my part, I am not merely content to call it a part of marketing, but actively concerned that it shall be regarded in no other light. The idea that the employing of advertisements is a strange, intuitive process, an uncertain gamble which the venturesome may excusably indulge when money is plentiful, but which the plain course of wisdom demands shall be instantly abandoned when business becomes depressed, dies hard. It is far from dead yet. Manufacturers still make use of advertisements with this sneaking mistrust of them at the back of their minds. If their ill-organised effort deservedly fails, their mistrust is confirmed. If it succeeds, no one is more surprised than they. And their good fortune is either attributed to some other cause, or the admission is extracted that, this time, the gambler turned up trumps. Well, such use of advertisements *is* a gamble. It is a gamble because it is embarked upon with a fundamental misconception: none other than this, that advertising consists of inserting advertisements in the Press. This is not advertising, at all events in the sense in which I understand that word; and advertising cannot be understood to mean this so long as

advertising is looked upon as a part of the routine of marketing. Thus regarded, advertising clearly becomes part of something much larger. Advertising is part of a business operation of a rather conservative nature—organised selling effort.

No manufacturer thinks he is embarking upon a reckless adventure when he engages a staff of travelling salesmen and organises a sales department to procure orders for his merchandise from the wholesale and retail trade. Suggest to him that he is thus acting improvidently and he will in all likelihood demand (most reasonably) how else he can be expected to sell his goods. If it is not thought risky to engage ten travelling salesmen and pay them five thousand a year to go out and sell goods, why is it thought risky to spend a similar sum on advertising? For this reason: that so many otherwise business-like men still regard advertising as a matter of catch-lines and slogans. Every advertisement, to them, is isolated and self-contained instead of one unit in a persistent and continuous scheme of marketing. Business men realise that the organisation of a sales staff is largely a matter of trial and experiment, this because they are familiar with it and understand it thoroughly. One salesman is one of many, and the whole staff of salesmen is only a part of the sales department. Thus, if one salesman, after six months' endeavour, fails to

sell his quota, the only alarming consequence is that he will probably lose his job. His employer does not immediately assume that all salesmen are a delusion and a snare, and sack the lot. Even if the whole sales staff is slower in moving the goods on to the wholesale and retail trade than was anticipated, even then the Board does not wring its directorial hands and declare that the only way of saving the firm from ruin is to give up this rash and hazardous experiment of employing salesmen and a sales department. Not a bit of it. There may be a few dismissals; even the sales manager himself may have to go. What happens is, that the Board searches for the reasons for what is regarded as a partial failure. All kinds of investigations are made. The salesmen's abilities are looked into, their terms reviewed, wholesale and retail discounts and credit terms are rediscussed and perhaps altered, even the product itself may be modified.

But let a few advertisements fail to produce all that was expected after a couple of months' trial and there is a very different tale to tell. The whole Board now sees the experiment to have been foredoomed to failure from the start. Does it occur to the Board to examine the various stages in the transference of the goods from the firm to the public to discover whether at any stage some condition is militating against ready

acceptance of the firm's products? Is the product itself examined to see whether some modification would make sales more easily procurable? Briefly, are other factors examined along with the advertisements so that the real impediment to sales may be found? Sometimes all that I have suggested will be done. Usually, however, the immediate assumption is not merely that the methods employed in the advertisements were wrong, but that the Board was wrong ever to have countenanced this costly and uncertain gambling with chance. The fact is that in such instances the advertisements were inserted with little or no attempt to correlate them with the other activities of the sales department. It was not the advertisements which failed, it was the organisation which ought to have accompanied them which was imperfect. The experiment was started in an unbusiness-like way, and the results are necessarily discussed from an equally unbusiness-like point of view. I do not believe this to be an extreme example. There are many exceptions, I know. But I also know that hundreds of times something very like what I have described occurs. And when it does occur, one more firm is added to the list of those who have tried advertising and found it doesn't pay. I never hear that statement without mistrust, because I know that failure is much more often attributable to

poor management than to poor advertising. There is nothing magical about the working of advertising. I repeat that it is a business operation which, if properly organised, is of a rather conservative nature. But if advertisements are suddenly introduced into a business routine, and nothing is done adequately to organise the sales department so that it may fit its work in with the advertisements, then money is certainly being spent on a very risky venture. It may be that the results from the advertisements will be so great that they will obscure the other inefficiencies; but it is very unlikely, and no one deserves any credit for it if they are, least of all, the advertising man responsible.

The whole point of this is that a series of advertisements does not constitute a marketing campaign. And success can only come if the whole effort of the sales department is correlated with the advertisements. Travelling salesmen must be informed fully upon the purpose and policy of the whole marketing scheme. They must be shown how and why they will be assisted by it. Printed matter to the wholesale and retail trade must be circulated with the same end. A selling scheme must be devised which similarly uses the Press (and other) advertisements so that the most may be made of them. Unless organised work of this kind is done, it is folly to expect

advertisements to produce results on a profitable scale. It is only when advertising is thus employed that it ceases to be a hit-or-miss chance, and becomes a reasonable certainty in its effect in selling a commodity. It is difficult for a considered and intelligently planned marketing scheme of this kind to fail. It may be a partial failure if unskillfully devised, but it is very improbable that it will be a total failure.¹

Marketing when considered in this way is seen quite clearly to depend upon sales organisation, not upon clever advertisements. Clever advertisements alone have never made a marketing campaign a success. And poor advertisements alone have never made one a failure. Ill-informed people (even business men) frequently suppose that advertising is merely clever copywriting. This is because they do not see advertising as a part of marketing. Copywriting is an exceedingly important part of advertising—as I hope presently to show. But it can never be the whole. And it never, in any circumstances whatever, depends for success upon the invention of “smart” phrases. Of all the many misconceptions of advertising which are so readily to be discovered,

¹ It is assumed here that a market is known to exist for the commodity in question. If this is not a certainty there must be preliminary market research to establish whether a market exists or not.

I believe that this idea, that effective advertising depends chiefly upon "catchy" headlines and trashy slogans, is the most vicious. But that it is widely current is beyond doubt. Men, business-like in other respects, frequently betray their ignorance by talking of advertisements from this point of view. Even advertisers do it who ought to have learned enough to have discarded any such idea. It is difficult to listen with patience to such rubbish from business men. When unknown members of the public commit the, doubtless well-intentioned, folly of submitting catchpenny ideas for advertisements (and every advertiser and advertising agent receives scores in the year), one's patience has to be extended at least to the extent of replying temperately to their letters and explaining as kindly as may be why their puerile pettinesses are unusable. The public, after all, is in no position to form an intelligent judgment. And while advertisers continue to cling tenaciously to pitiful and poverty-stricken trivialities like "British Buttons for British Bags,"¹ the public has abundant excuse for its mistaken views and ill-conceived offerings. But when advertisements have reached that point where business men regard them, and the public may

¹ Lest I be accused of exaggeration, let it be explained that this phrase reproduces a fairly widely advertised slogan exactly except for the name of the product.

depend upon them, as competently written information of where and how good value for money may be obtained, these misconceptions will cease. A very large proportion of advertisements may be properly so described now. Unfortunately, even experienced advertisers are still liable to lapses, and the public is still very apt to judge all advertisements by the small proportion of catchpenny impostures which are still sold by advertisement. The day will come when the Press will perceive that it is poor business to injure honest advertisers for the sake of the revenue to be got from quacks. It will realise, some day, that any advertisement which misleads the public reduces the effectiveness of all advertising.

It is the duty, as I see it, of all advertising men, and especially of all copywriters, to do their utmost to hasten the coming of this day.

Advertising properly used can exert enormous influence. Advertising men can and must insist that this influence is exerted in the interests of the public.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST ESSENTIAL OF A GOOD ADVERTISEMENT: A GOOD ARTICLE TO WRITE ABOUT

WHEN you hear a man say, "There's no need to advertise honest goods, they advertise themselves," know him for a man with a muddled mind. This kind of rubbish can only be uttered by unthinking people; for a moment's thought exposes it for the nonsense it is. So-called hard-headed business men sometimes talk like this. This is because it is popularly thought better for a business man to be hard-headed than to possess imagination. If an article has advantages which cause purchasers to praise it, is it not obvious that dependence upon mere mouth-to-mouth recommendation will sell fewer articles than if information concerning those advantages is widely disseminated? Is there anything risky in telling the public where good value for money may be obtained? It would be much nearer the truth to say that the better an article is the more successfully it may be advertised.

There are many reasons why the first essential of a good advertisement is a good article to write about: some are personal to the copywriter; others of a more general nature. The first is that

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it is difficult enough to write convincingly about a good article and impossible to write convincingly about a poor one. Under this heading more will be found elsewhere in this book.

Let us look at this question now in its general application. Almost always, an article is branded or trade-marked, or made distinguishable by some other means, before it is advertised. It has to be, because a main purpose of advertisements is to inform the public where to get good value, and how to get it. A brand or trade-mark or trade-name is put upon the article so that the public may distinguish it from all other competing articles in the same class.

Now, if you were a rascally manufacturer of specious goods which you desired to foist upon an unwitting public, would it not be the silliest commercial adventure ever known to trade-mark those goods and make a present to the unwary (who had made one purchase) of a means of avoiding them for ever afterwards? So long as goods are sold in small quantities measured from bulk, or with no distinguishable device upon them, it is comparatively easy to deceive the public repeatedly. Their poor quality is not discovered until it is too late. And the shopkeeper always has (and frequently makes use of) the excuse that *he* didn't make the goods, and consequently can accept no responsibility for them.

From every point of view, if a manufacturer does sell poor merchandise, it is easier to unload it on to the public if it bears no trade-mark. His identity is hidden from the public if complaints are made. He can deny (at a pinch) that the article is his at all. He can disown whatever recommendation the retail shopkeeper gave the article. He can sell at one price to one shop and at a higher price (if he can get it) to another. He can cut prices to ribbons if this suits him, and still further debase the quality so as to make a profit. And there is always the welcome chance that if his article is unbranded it may be mistaken for another of less miserable worth.

Equally, if you are a manufacturer of reputable merchandise, your first desire should be to trade-mark your goods so that every satisfied purchaser may have this means of knowing them again. You cannot put a brand upon an article of poor quality because, if you do, no one will ever buy it more than once. The brand will always act as a reminder of the article's poor or distasteful quality. Supposing you sell tea under a brand-name, and a house-mother is persuaded by your advertisements to buy a packet. Even though it is excellent tea, if her palate does not like it she will never buy that tea again. The name will be riveted in her memory as associated with a tea which is not to her taste.

If she buys tea from her grocer from bulk, or tea put up under a retail shopkeeper's name, there is no similar safeguard. Out of dislike for the tea he sells, she may even go to the length of changing her grocer and still get, unknowingly, the same tea, because the grocer over the road is supplied by the same wholesaler. With a branded tea, on the other hand, she is always safe. Wherever she may be living, she can get her favourite tea merely by asking for the brand she knows and likes.

Once a manufacturer (of tea or anything) has put a brand upon his article and advertised its advantages, he has set up a standard of quality, and he must maintain it. If he lowers the quality of his article, his whole goodwill, which may have cost him thousands to promote, will be in danger. It would amount to commercial suicide to risk it. What sense would there be in making a good article, and in advertising the advantages of it in order to sell it, and then to debase its quality deliberately? You could not go on telling the public that the quality of the article remained as high as ever, because every purchaser of the debased article would find you out to be a liar. How many more times would they buy your article after such a discovery? A manufacturer's goodwill, as represented by the custom he has built up by judicious advertising, is his most

valuable asset. His plant might be destroyed by fire in a single night, and still the goodwill represented by his trade-mark will be an asset worth more, perhaps, than his lost plant. Nothing can destroy the goodwill of an advertised trade-mark except gross mismanagement.

On the other hand, the manufacturer who sells unbranded merchandise is always at the mercy of his customers. Wholesalers or retailers can stop buying at any moment they choose, and he is powerless to compel them to return to him. He is never really the owner of his business: his customers own him. The man who owns a trade-mark owns his business. So long as he manages his business reasonably, keeps his quality up and the public informed of it, wholesalers and retailers must either handle his article or turn away good money. It may be freely admitted that the manufacturer who trade-marks his merchandise does put himself into the hands of the public. If his quality falls off his business will fall away. To that extent he is at the public's mercy. But so long as he makes an honest article and sells it by honest means, where is the danger in that? The public is his customer, remember; the wholesale and retail trades are his distributors. So long as the goods remain satisfactory, the public will be well content to buy them: habit ensures this. The wholesaler or retailer who is buying un-

branded goods does not buy thus. He cares less about quality than he does about cheapness. He buys at the lowest price he can get, with an eye on a large profit, or a cut price to defeat his competitor on the opposite side of the street. He is forced to buy in this way, more for price than for value, because there will be no advertising to cause volume of sales to reduce selling prices and to help to shift the goods. And it is easier to sell on cheapness than on quality when you are a poor salesman, as most retailers are.

There is thus a vast difference between a business which is at the mercy of a few wholesalers and one which depends for prosperity upon the goodwill of the public.

From the business point of view, every consideration of prudence demands that merit in the merchandise to be advertised is the first essential. From the copywriter's point of view the position is the same. The difficulty of writing convincingly about poor merchandise is obvious. The cruelty of asking a copywriter to do it may be less obvious, but is just as real. No one has any right to ask it.¹

There is another reason why merit in the commodity is the first essential of a good advertisement. Every good advertisement has facts for its basis. Advertising is largely the dissemination of

¹ See also Chapter X.

information, of facts. Without facts advertising becomes weak, aimless, anæmic stuff. And you can hardly have facts without quality. The purpose of advertisements is to acquaint the largest possible number of people at the smallest possible cost with the advantages which the advertised article possesses. Advertising ought to be informative. You cannot be informative about poor merchandise and expect to sell it. It takes more ingenuity than most people have to lie consistently and at length, even if there were no other reasons for abandoning this method in favour of a better. Granted that there are occasions when copy may assume an emotional form, even then facts should be the basis of the copy, and facts must always argue value for money.

It is the same with copy which dwells at length upon the advantages of possessing the article rather than with the advantages which *it* possesses—for instance, advertisements which describe the delights of owning a player piano. Even such copy as this cannot be convincing (because it cannot be true) unless the article in question is of good quality.

I know that all advertised brands cannot be superlatively good. But all must have their own particular merits. Some will be so good that there will be little to choose between them (these probably present the hardest problem to the copy-

writer), others will be not so good, and different arguments, sometimes lower price, will be employed to sell them. But there is no article honestly advertised which is bad. And if you feel inclined to doubt whether the first essential of a good advertisement really is a good article to write about, ask yourself whether you could, decently, write about an article which lacked genuineness. You will find it a hopeless and disheartening reflection.

CHAPTER IV

THE SECOND ESSENTIAL OF A GOOD ADVERTISEMENT: THE RIGHT POLICY

IT has already been emphasised that copy is very far from being the most important thing in advertising. Even to the point of tediousness, this point of view will have to be emphasised again in this chapter, because policy has a bearing upon it. I do not think there is any one element in advertising which can be singled out as *the* most important. Successful advertising depends upon organisation. It must be part of an ordered scheme. The factory, the travelling salesmen, the wholesale and retail trades all enter into this scheme, and all must understand what is being done. An advertising scheme which is really well organised must have something almost uncannily wrong with it for it to fail. I have heard (with impatience) debates as to which is the more important, the advertising manager or the sales manager. People who can waste time wrangling about such a thing as this make a public admission that they do not know what advertising is.

But there is no doubt at all about what is the most important thing in a series of advertisements: it is a policy governing those advertisements. This comes before anything else. Merit in

the commodity comes before the advertising begins, unless the advertiser is a fraud or a fool. The importance of policy in advertising ought to be obvious once it has been grasped that successful advertising *is* a matter of sound organisation. It would appear difficult to construct a piece of sound organisation without a policy being behind it. Yet it has been done, at least so far as the advertisements themselves were concerned. It would hardly be safe to say that because a series of advertisements lacks policy the rest of the advertising scheme must lack policy too, though there is some probability of this. It is quite safe to say, however, that more advertisements appear in the Press without any settled policy directing them (even a wrong one!) than appear with a considered policy binding them into a coherent whole aiming at a definite purpose. By advertisement policy I mean a pre-considered and settled purpose in the mind of the advertiser, and decision on his part as to the methods which are to be used to achieve that purpose. All advertisements ought to be based upon such a purpose, and once this purpose is determined, every advertisement ought to be written with a view to bringing the advertiser nearer to its achievement. Every line spoken in a well-constructed play tells the audience something which advances the action of the plot. It may help

to reveal the character of one of the persons in the play, or it may develop the action itself: either way it advances the story. Every advertisement should similarly advance the situation which the advertisements are seeking to create. Unless some such considered purpose *is* at the back of any series of advertisements they will be weak. Advertisements work slowly in their effect upon the public mind. It is never safe to assume that a series of advertisements is going to be read and understood. People do not, generally speaking, read advertisements in this way. Advertisements can adopt, very usefully, a series form; but if this method is employed, the last in the series ought to leave as little as possible assumed. It is better, though a series form is adopted, to make each advertisement self-contained, complete. This, however, is going a little too fast.

I want my idea of policy to be fully understood. Advertisement policy is not necessarily the same thing as marketing policy, though the two are sometimes so interrelated as to be inseparable.

Perhaps an example will clear this up. Some years ago a manufacturer was making some hundreds of different patterns of the same article. His factory was therefore constantly concerned with small runs, necessitating frequent setting-up of machines. This was expensive, and the manufacturing economies of large scale production

were out of reach. It was seen that if the number of patterns could be reduced from hundreds to scores, factory economies could be effected. This course was beset with difficulties, however. The retail trade was accustomed to order individual patterns to suit individual shopkeepers, and the travellers were afraid of losing orders if they told their shopkeeper friends that individual preferences and fads could no longer be provided for, and orders must be booked from a score of standard patterns. (Any one familiar with travellers and retailers in a line depending for saleability largely upon the personal taste of the public, and the retailers' estimation of it, will understand the kind of grumbling that went on.) Nevertheless the manufacturer was determined. What he did was to reduce his hundreds of patterns to the score that were most often ordered. Then the whole of his marketing policy became one of concentrating selling effort upon this score of patterns. The thing had to be done gradually. But this was the settled purpose which he had in mind, and his advertising policy had to conform to his marketing policy. For instance, in catalogues to the retail trade nearly all the former hundred patterns were mentioned, and most of them illustrated as they always had been, but the score or so of patterns that he was concentrating upon were illustrated *in colour*. And,

exactly as expected, the vast bulk of the orders came in for these. Similarly, advertisements emphasised the standard lines, the object of the advertising policy being to educate the public into demanding what the manufacturer wanted to sell, so that the retail trade should order what the public actually demanded. In time, of course, all the patterns were dropped except the standard ones.

Clearly, if this advertiser had merely advertised in such a way as to promote *general* demand for his commodity, all the rest of his carefully devised plan would have gone fatally wrong. This is an intentionally elementary example; but it illustrates the infinite importance of thinking out a policy and of sticking to it. Here marketing policy and advertisement policy were identical in purpose. They need not always be identical, however. A settled policy may have been arrived at which all the advertisements expound, and yet other policies may govern selling the goods to the wholesale and retail trade. And the retail trade *may* know no more about the advertisement policy than it perceives for itself from a perusal of the advertisements in the portfolio of advertisements which will probably be provided for its information.

Similarly an advertisement policy is not the same thing as a copy angle. The same advertise-

ment policy may be expounded from a variety of different copy angles. For instance, the advertisement policy might be to sell a given article not by attractive description of the article itself, but by description of the pleasure to be enjoyed from using it, and this is capable of almost infinite variety of copy treatment. The important thing is that you ought to know, before the advertisements are prepared, exactly what impression you want the advertisements to make upon the public mind, and that having been decided, all the advertisements should be framed with that end clearly and resolutely held in view. Nothing should be allowed to interfere with it. Every isolated idea, however temptingly brilliant it may appear, should be ruthlessly discarded if it cannot be made to fit in with your preconceived policy. Poorly written copy directed by the right policy will sell more goods every time than brilliantly clever copy directed by the wrong policy. But both will sell more goods than copy which dodges about from one idea to another and has no settled policy at all. Settled policy is what counts. If I deprecate dividing advertising into elements (preferring to regard it as organised selling) and hesitate to name any element as more important than another (when all are so largely interdependent), I repeat that there can be no hesitation whatever

about policy being far and away the most important element in advertisement writing.

The reason appears to me obvious. The policy (the considered purpose in the advertiser's mind) may be to create a certain atmosphere around his commodity, or to emphasise one particular selling point above all others, or merely to make his brand acceptable if offered in the place of an older, better-known brand by a shopkeeper, or to dissuade the public from a popular conception about a (differing) competitive article, or just to hammer away continually at a number of equally important selling points, planning the advertisements so that one selling point is successively emphasised with the others subordinated to it. It is pretty well impossible to suggest rules in this matter because every commodity must be examined individually with a dozen different considerations in mind, and a policy must be devised to fit those considerations. But all the above policies have been employed in practice. (I hope it does not need to be said that whatever the policy decided upon, it must be based upon the article in question and its qualities : endeavouring to create prestige for an article which cannot justify it is, of course, unthinkable.)

The whole point is that a definite purpose ought to be behind the advertisements and animating them, and that this purpose ought never

to be lost sight of. I say that this is an obvious necessity, because the effect of advertisements on the public consciousness is gradual.

Provided advertising is looked upon as a part only of an ordered marketing scheme, the necessity for an equally ordered advertisement policy is not very hard to perceive. The kind of mind which can appreciate the need for careful planning to bring the advertising into relation with the rest of the marketing scheme will also approach the separate problem of the advertising in the same intelligent way. But this kind of mind is not too frequently met with. What occurs very often is that the manufacturer (and not seldom in happy disregard of his sales manager's plans) goes to an advertising agent and demands what he calls a complete advertising campaign, the whole thing to be ready to appear in the newspapers in fourteen days' time. This kind of demand is little short of imbecile ; but every advertising agent knows that it is made continually. It is to the discredit of advertising agents that they do so little to bring such manufacturers to their senses. What the agent usually does, instead of standing up to the manufacturer and telling him that no properly planned campaign can possibly be prepared in such a way—what he usually does is to submit tamely to the demand, and move heaven and earth within his organisation to

produce some kind of a campaign. And such is the production efficiency of most agencies that really finely conceived, and written, and illustrated advertisements *are* produced. But this kind of thing never ought to be done, and advertising agents will never gain the respect of business men so long as they continue to do it.

Even when the manufacturer has sense enough to plan the other parts of a marketing scheme properly, he sometimes leaves the actual preparation of the advertisements until three weeks before they should appear. I am going to repeat to the point of tiresomeness that this comes from isolating advertising as something apart, thinking of it as being a department of business separated from the other departments. It cannot happen when the word "marketing" is understood.

We *are* concerned in this chapter, however, with advertisements in themselves, and with their effect upon the public mind. Indeed, from this point onward we shall be mainly so concerned.

In emphasising the gradual effect of advertisements upon the public, Mr. A. H. Deute (in that invaluable publication, *Printers' Ink* [New York]) stated the theory of advertisements with admirable clarity when he wrote :

"The mass of people is not inclined to maintain sustained mental effort. These people may or

may not be inclined to maintain this effort, but the fact remains that they do not do so.

"The small minority, willing to maintain this continued mental effort and exert sustained pressure on the great majority can, therefore, and constantly does, sway the majority to its way of thinking.

"If the thought of the small minority is correct, and the results it attains are worthy and useful, then the great majority is glad to continue to follow the practice, not giving much serious thought to it one way or another."¹

Now, a full-page advertisement in a national daily newspaper is beyond doubt the most powerful individual advertisement procurable. Being a full page, its "attention-value" is the highest obtainable, and the national daily newspaper is a more powerful medium of advertisement than any other.

Such an advertisement, then, which appeared in a national daily of one million sale, assuming that it was the first announcement of a new product, and that it offered nothing very remarkable

¹ The quotation consists of the opening paragraphs of Mr. Deute's article. The whole of the article was reprinted by permission of *Printers' Ink* in *Nuntius : Advertising and its Future*, published by Kegan Paul. This is mentioned solely because the article is, in my opinion, a classic, and *Printers' Ink* invariably goes out of print very soon after publication.

in the way of a sample, could be regarded as highly successful if it produced direct response from twenty thousand readers. The figure at first glance looks large. It is only 2 per cent. of the sale of the paper. For every hundred persons who bought the paper, ninety-eight made no direct response to the advertisement. To what extent that ninety-eight received a favourable impression we do not know. But we do know that we have this vast proportion to wake up to action. Is it not abundantly obvious that we must hammer away at that proportion with enormous persistence? We must have an objective very clearly in view. We must have a very clear idea of the method which will be most likely, in our judgment, to make that proportion act in the way we want it to act. And we must keep on at that method decisively. Once we begin to switch from one method to another, confusion will be bound to arise amongst these people.

What is meant is this, simply. The selling points of the article in question must be determined. Then the most effective way of describing those selling points must be decided.¹ Then the most effective method of presenting those selling points in illustrations and layout must be decided. And, of course, all of this must take the form of

¹ These things are not elaborated here, because they are dealt with in their proper place later.

a series of advertisements, each one as complete as is practicable in itself, and each one looking like all the others. And once these things are decided, they must be persisted in. Some features of such a series may be less well described or illustrated or laid out than others. There may be something so seriously wrong with the series that a different conception of the whole thing might have been an improvement. All this is granted. Skill and experience are, of course, not infallible. The point I want to make with the greatest emphasis is that if anything actually is wrong, the results will not reveal it for some considerable time, even to an advertising man of the highest skill.

The manufacturer who supposes that he can start an advertising campaign this week and expect to know next week whether it will pay for itself is expecting the impossible. If this is his conception of advertising, he had better keep his money in the bank.

It is fatally wrong to regard single advertisements as individual selling efforts. To do this is to look at advertising with an entirely false perspective. Individual advertisements can tell an advertising man very little indeed; they can tell a manufacturer nothing at all. The scheme as a whole must be considered. And provided it was prepared by competent men, it is the longest

odds that it had better be left alone for six months at the very least.

Advertisements, obviously, from the figures quoted earlier in this chapter, work gradually upon the public mind. At the outset, the vast proportion of the public takes no direct action.

A small proportion responds. A slightly larger proportion notices but does nothing. The largest proportion of all does not even notice. The last-named proportion must have the "sustained mental effort" pressed upon it until it becomes the second proportion, and until that proportion becomes the first. In simpler terms, the people who did not even notice your first advertisement must have a second advertisement put before them, and this process must be continued until they *do* notice the advertisements. Then the people who noticed your advertisement the first time, but did nothing, must be reminded of this advertisement by a second advertisement, and they must be reminded before they have forgotten the first one. They must be reminded of this second advertisement by a third, again before they have forgotten the second. And so on throughout the series of efforts which you are making to bring them round to your way of thinking. This process is called the "cumulative effect" of advertising.

And it is clear that if, instead of keeping

steadily on by the same methods at the same points, you are continually switching from one point of view to another, the public, so far from being assisted to *remember* previous advertisements, is actually helped to *forget* them. You start people thinking in one direction, and then, instead of confirming them in their half-formed belief, you implant some quite different idea in their minds, and the first belief is driven out. Keep on doing this and no idea about your commodity will ever become fixed in people's minds; instead, their minds (so far as your goods are concerned), will be a confused jumble of hesitation. This is exactly what does happen continually. It always will happen where the advertising has no settled policy.

By far the best way to prevent this is not merely to decide upon an advertisement policy, but to *commit the decisions arrived at to writing*. This suggestion was first advanced in print, I believe, in a series of articles I wrote in 1921. But the case in favour of a written policy has never been stated with such force and clarity as in the pages of *The Consultant*. What follows is reprinted by permission from that journal.

"When an advertiser starts operations for the season, the instructions given to his advertising manager and agent seldom take the form of

written documents. Except as regards actual contracts for space and printing, everything is done 'according to a general understanding, stated by word of mouth. This has grave disadvantages. The efficiency of the campaign is liable to be diminished by it. However well the various persons concerned, as advertiser, advertising manager, advertising agent, illustrators, copywriters, printers, billposting contractors, etc., understand each other, every one of them will do better work if the whole policy of the campaign is on authoritative record, to refresh the memory and settle any of the misunderstandings bound to occur in the best regulated organisations. Every man accustomed to write at all thinks with far greater precision, and decides with much more determination, when his thoughts and decisions are committed to paper. 'Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.'

"No man can perform, or even direct, the whole of any but a very small business single-handed; and facts buried in his mind cannot be transmitted to other people. Consequently his assistants work according to the conception of the business that is in their minds. This is certain to differ more or less profoundly from that in the mind of their chief; and, consequently, the organisation does not pull together. It is like poor Ouida's (or was it Miss Corelli's?) university oarsman—all the crew pulled fast, but none so fast as he!

"The policy with which the business will be conducted cannot be fully efficient thus. Methods will be adopted without confidence. One executive officer, or another, will have a vague feeling that there is something wrong with them in some of their details, but that these belong to some one else's department, and he cannot quite well interfere. There is no standard to which anything can be referred. Thus one man's work detracts from the efficiency of another's, or overlaps it. Or, perhaps, the misgivings that arise are those of some one whose authority is great enough to give effect to them, overriding the opinion of the rest. Then the whole scheme, perhaps sound enough (though vague) in conception, is disturbed. Before the working plan has had time to show results, it is altered, and a rise or fall in sales is attributed to the new plan, though really caused by the one just abandoned. Details of the campaign are altered, and the financial balance of it upset, by introducing new expenditures. After the scheme has been carefully worked out with the advertising agent employed, and the money allocated to good advantage, a clever canvasser obtains the ear of the advertiser or some one set in authority under him, and gets an order, the effect of which must either be to increase the total expenditure, or else cause investment deliberately allotted to some other medium to be reduced. Some one (inside or outside the organisation) thinks of a bright-looking piece of copy or a clever illustration, and the style of advertis-

ing adopted, let us hope, with careful consideration, is altered, either generally or in spots. The remedy for this somewhat alarming state of affairs—because it *is* alarming when you are brought face to face with it—is a definite written ‘policy.’ ”

Purely from the copywriter’s point of view, the importance of having a policy to work to (whether written or merely understood) needs little labouring.

The first thing it does is to make your work easier to do. It does a lot of thinking for you. Some one has said (with excusable coarseness) that good copy is one-tenth inspiration and nine-tenths perspiration. This thinker must have had policy in his mind when he enunciated the epigram. If you are a copywriter you will, unless you are your own chief, receive your instructions as to the policy to be followed from your superior. And by that fact, almost nine-tenths of your work will have been done for you. If you have a policy that you understand which must be advanced by your copy, it is comparatively easy to think out copy angles appropriate to it. By copy angles I mean situations, dialogues, headlines, ideas capable of pictorial illustration, lines of thought, and so on: all these will come fairly easily if they have to centre round some single dominating purpose.

Another effect which a settled policy has on your work is that the advertiser for whom you are working will not continually (and exasperatingly) shoot off at some irrelevant tangent. You will meet him with common ground between you. You will be working together for an end already understood and agreed. You will not have to meet him and go over the same ground again and again. All you will have to do will be to discuss with him different copy angles which will suit the main purpose of his advertising. Working in this way, in partnership, it will be easy to keep your enthusiasm alive. You won’t have to waste time explaining why some silly idea introduced from outside is not, in your opinion, of any use. The policy being known to both of you, the uselessness of such isolated ideas which do not fit in will be apparent after very little discussion. This is an immense gain. Any one who has worked for any length of time with advertisers will appreciate it !

CHAPTER V

THE THIRD ESSENTIAL OF A GOOD ADVERTISEMENT: THE RIGHT SALES ARGUMENT

I. THE FIFTEEN FORMS OF COPY

A GOOD deal must still be discussed before the actual writing of copy can be considered. The time has come now to examine the various forms that copy can assume. No one can call himself qualified to write copy until he is familiar with them and understands them. They will be taken one by one, therefore, and an attempt made to discover the principles underlying them. The marketing policy and the advertisement policy must, naturally, radically affect the form which the copy will assume to express those policies. To some extent, the last chapter went a little ahead. Now we come back to retrace the ground not covered previously.

I am going to suggest that copy has fifteen forms. By this is meant fifteen *methods* of planning copy, not fifteen styles of writing. Notwithstanding at least two unusually brilliant exceptions, it is my belief that a copywriter should have no fixed style. I lay myself open to damaging criticism (and shall probably get it) by the assertion. Yet it seems to me sound. You

cannot use the same kind of words, or the same kind of constructions, to sell lorry tyres to technical users as you employ to sell face powder to women; you cannot use the same kind of words to sell player pianos to the readers of *The Times* as you use to sell boots to the readers of *Home Chat*. If you do, you must inevitably, it seems to me, fail to impress large numbers of readers. Apart from this aspect of the thing, as a copywriter you ought to reflect the character of whatever article you are writing about. Not your character, or your brilliance as a writer, but the article's character. Consequently, you must have at command great versatility. And on the whole, I believe I prefer versatility, even though it seldom rises much above mediocrity, to that kind of brilliance which is invariable, which is always brilliant in the same way and by the same devices. The really versatile writer who is only seldom brilliant is the more useful in the long run, and will, I think, sell more goods for his clients. More under this head will be suggested later in a more appropriate place. Let us discuss now the fifteen forms of copy.

1. *Pure Display or "Publicity" Advertisements.*—This is the simplest form that an advertisement can assume, and the least efficient. By it is meant the advertisement which simply repeats the name of the article—nothing more.

There is an historical reason for the invention, many years ago, of this kind of advertisement. It need not detain us. This kind of copy is out of date. Why it is persisted in is a mystery. If you are going to use this method of presenting a case (if it can be called that) to the public, it is clear that posters are a very much cheaper medium to employ than the Press. Why the Press, essentially the medium which admits and indeed demands, reasoned argument, should ever be used, as it still is, for pure display copy, is, I say, a mystery. The cynical will probably remark that the advertisement which simply repeats the name of the article and nothing else is the highest ideal of advertisement: it is absolutely truthful! It may be. It is also grossly wasteful. Even a poster, whose main function is usually to remind rather than to educate, is obviously strengthened by the addition of a phrase (to say nothing of an illustration). A Press advertisement which ought to educate, to reason, to argue, is even more obviously strengthened by such additions. You will never, therefore, use pure display copy unless overruled by an advertiser.

2. *Mixed Display*.—Even in these more or less enlightened days of advertising, it has not occurred to all advertisers that when the name of the product is being displayed, the addition of a phrase providing some reason for buying it

will strengthen the advertisement. When this does occur the result is "mixed display"—the name of the product and a line or two of descriptive matter. You will see this kind of copy most frequently in the form of enamelled plates on railway stations. It ought not to be dismissed as hideous and inefficient purely on that account however. It is quite true that most enamelled plates on railway stations are hideous (and therefore inefficient), and made more inefficient still by the poverty of phrase which characterises them. But they need not be. They are only ugly because of the lazy ignorance of the people who design and approve them. Enamelled plates competently written and designed can be as efficient as posters, and just as beautiful.

3. *Selling Facts about the Goods*.—This is the most usual form that copy assumes, and probably the most useful—plain, straightforward facts: "Truth well told," as an agency cleverly phrases it. Your story may be told informatively, newsily, emotionally—in many different ways, according to the policy which the copy has to express. These will be considered in their proper place, as will the illustrations which may or may not accompany the copy and the type which will be employed. For the moment it is only necessary to mention this as a copy form.

4. *Copy based on Selling Plan*.—Naturally these

copy forms which are being described now overlap one another. You cannot imagine, for instance, copy based on a selling plan which does not also tell facts about the wares advertised. Yet this fourth form is a definite copy method. It has been made familiar by furniture houses which sell furniture more upon the convenience of paying for it in instalments than upon the merits of the furniture itself: the convenience of getting a lot of furniture quickly without needing capital has been described with greater elaboration than the furniture, and has sold a lot of it. Other instances which occur are sets of books, pianos, motor-cars, watches, and so on. This is a pretty good way of selling any article which is expensive in the sense that more money is needed to buy it than most people have readily available.

Another example, not quite in the same class, but employing this method, is provided by the advertisements which offer goods upon the attraction of a sampling offer of some kind. Yet another is the advertisement which offers a substantial guarantee that the article is up to some definite accepted standard. Three other examples may be mentioned. A lubricating oil has been sold upon a very clever chart which gave all the best known makes of cars and motor-cycles, and stated the best grade of oil, summer and winter, to suit the engines. This is a clever idea.

It sells oil by solving the perplexing problem of knowing what is the best kind of oil to use. This idea might well be adapted for other things. Then a famous make of typewriter was once sold by post upon the plan of guaranteeing it to be the same machine as that which previously cost twice as much because less efficient selling methods had been employed. (It had previously been sold by salesmen working through branch offices. When these were both dispensed with, and advertisements were substituted, the reduced cost of selling enabled the price to be halved! People who think advertising increases the cost of merchandise had better think this over.) Lastly, baby grand pianos have been sold upon the offer of ingeniously devised paper patterns of the size of the pianos, which enabled a prospective purchaser to put the paper pattern down on the floor and see how easily a baby grand would go into quite a small room. These few examples show how easily this copy method may be adapted to suit different articles. This is an immensely strong copy method especially for articles which have strong competition to face. An article may have few individual merits of its own to distinguish it from others: if so, it becomes difficult to describe the article in such a way as to make it sound superior to competing articles. In these circumstances copy based upon

a novel-selling plan might easily place the article in a class by itself. The selling-plan method is a most excellent one. But beware of concluding too hastily that the article you have to write about is actually one with no character of its own. To a skilled man such an article hardly exists. You must study the article until you do discover the selling points which give it character. You must consider that your job has not been done properly until you have discovered them; and eight times out of ten you will succeed. When you have finally decided that this particular article is an exception to the rule, it is time to start all over again, determined to find those facts that you need: they are nearly always there. Resource and an original turn of mind for discovering this kind of thing are a necessary part of every copywriter's equipment. This is not, therefore, a method to adopt because you are too lazy to study the goods properly.

But this kind of copy method is strong for another reason. It gives the reader something to do. It makes him feel that he is expected to act in a particular way. It is definite. It suggests action to him (or her, of course), and sometimes, it will have been seen, it suggests a particularly easy course of action. For all these reasons it is a powerful method.

There is just one more example that has been

reserved until the end of this section: the futile kind of advertisement which is a favourite with the sellers of whisky and some few other products. This kind of advertisement has a usually large, often expensive, and always irrelevant picture of (for instance) a howling mob of ancient Britons. The copy consists of a fairly lengthy description of the incident with many historical details, and at the end of it all the entranced reader discovers that "at about the same year that the ancient Britons discovered a new method of making stone arrow-heads, the House of M'Swiler commenced to distil the famous old brand of Ten Star Whisky," or words to that effect. Believing that far too much advertising of alcoholic liquor appears, I applaud what seems to me a foolishly mistaken way of attempting to sell it. But as an advertising man I deplore the inefficiency of it. This method seems to me to be based upon an entire misconception of the public attitude towards advertisements. It assumes that the public is interested in them as such. I cannot accept the assumption. And if it were true, it seems to me that this method must appear tiresome even to any who possess this *penchant*. The futility of the method is best shown, however, by reversing the process and suggesting a picture of, for instance, a large bottle of whisky, an equally interesting description of the House of

M'Swiller, and a footnote explaining that if you buy a "Cushy" easy-chair you may expect it to last as many centuries as the House of M'Swiller is old. It is as essential surely that an easy-chair shall last as that a whisky shall be distilled by an old-established firm, though the reversal of these means of suggesting age may not be entirely fair.

5. *Want-creating Copy* is not very easy to define, because other kinds of copy may appear to (and may actually) overlap this method—particularly what will be described later as indirect copy: there is a distinction however. Want-creating copy makes the reader want merchandise of the *kind* advertised. For instance, advertisements describing the alluring taste of chocolates, with a wealth of detail about the fresh fruit juices used to flavour cream centres, and the Irish butter, and pure sugar, and so on, used, may make the reader desire chocolates of *any* kind if the advertised brand is unprocurable. It ought, of course, to set out to make the reader want the brand advertised and none other, but it may whet the appetite so effectually that the reader *must* have chocolates of some kind!

Similarly, this method may be used to sell a player piano by describing the unending delight and consolation and inspiration of music. It then has a further advantage: the joyousness of music can easily be so described that price

becomes an unimportant detail by comparison. Of course this kind of copy presents wonderful opportunities to the copywriter for an appeal to the emotions and for copy in story form. A good many manufacturers shy at this method for fear that their advertisements might sell competing articles rather than their own. They keep to uninteresting details about their product, forgetting that such details may not only fail to awaken any desire at all (simply because they *are* uninteresting), but may also actually make their own product sound unnecessarily complicated.

If want-creating copy is skilfully written, there need be no fear that any proportion of competing articles worth troubling about will be sold by it. And isn't it better to describe your product so that the public attitude towards all products in the same class will be friendly rather than to describe it in such a way that the public feels a need for cautious comparison before buying? The right kind of want-creating copy can do both of these things; it can make the public friendly to all such merchandise, and it can make a particular article appear extremely desirable.

Want-creating copy will always be a powerful method, especially for any comparatively new article. For instance, in the early days of vacuum-cleaners, it must have been easier to sell the idea of a vacuum-cleaner by describing how it cleaned

a house—by *removing* the dirt instead of merely stirring up dust with brooms—than by describing a mechanical detail of the cleaner. The description of cleanliness and health makes a fundamental appeal: the other does not; it may even obscure the real buying motive. The best method is a combination of the two.

6. *Indirect Copy* is *more* indirect than want-creating copy. Railway tickets are sold by saying that Skegness is so bracing. Travel is sold by pictures and description of beautiful scenery. Transport is sold by description of convenient sites for factories.

7. *How to use Copy*.—Describing the uses of the product is another copy method. Disinfectants are thus advertised. A classic example is the non-competitive advertising of the gas industry through the British Commercial Gas Association, which has produced a large increase in the consumption of gas for domestic and industrial lighting and heating and power by advertisements describing the usefulness of gas for these purposes.

8. *Prestige Copy*.—Prestige copy does not attempt to sell the goods in detail. Instead, it dwells upon the resources, vastness, up-to-date methods, etc., of the house that manufactures them or sells them. Sometimes it emphasises the antiquity of the firm or its conservative tradi-

tions: at others the rapid growth of it. The advertiser pays the money and takes his choice, not always a wise one. More futile generalities get into print under the name of prestige copy than any other way, probably. Speaking generally, it has to be said that prestige copy is a method to be distrusted. There are three reasons for this piece of caution. The first is that prestige advertising is usually poorly conceived and badly written. This being so, the second reason is that it is an ever-tempting refuge of lazy advertisers. The third is that prestige copy so frequently assumes an *interest* in advertisements on the part of the public, and this is never a safe assumption. And there is a fourth reason: prestige copy is very apt to leave the reader with nothing to do: no request is made of him. This produces a certain lameness. *Always* have something you want the reader to do, and tell him what it is in no uncertain terms.

If no manufacturer ever advertised without first putting into writing exactly what he wanted his advertising to do, nine-tenths of prestige copy would have to be scrapped as inadequate.

Nevertheless there are times and circumstances when prestige copy can be legitimately employed. Before we come to an example, let one more thing be said. At no time is prestige copy any excuse for woolly writing and loose thinking.

If prestige copy must be used (and it is rather a last resort, I think), let it be active, and let it contain facts. There is no more reason for generalities in prestige copy than in any other kind.

Now for the promised example. A firm may sell a number of related articles, like prepared foods and relishes, all of which have much the same appeal. It may be necessary to advertise all of them (instead of concentrating on one or two), and there may not be enough money to give adequate frequency of insertions to all these articles: any one of them, for instance, might, in such conditions, get only two or three insertions in a year. Clearly, two or three such advertisements would not promote anything like enough demand. In such conditions, prestige copy which sold *all* the products by some common appeal, such as cleanliness of preparation and carefulness in the selection of ingredients, might quite well be the most effective copy method. An adequately frequent repetition of the main sales argument would thus be procured, and by promoting ready consumer-acceptance of any product bearing the manufacturer's name the advertisements would successfully sell the goods. Given good merchandising helps for the retail trade, happy relations with it, exceptionally good quality in the product sufficient in itself partly to offset competition, prestige copy might serve.

But distrust it always: and by fair means or foul, keep the whiskers of the founder and pictures of the factory out of it!

9. *Competition Copy*.—This is really a mere variation of copy based upon the selling plan—having a competition of some kind offering prizes. But whereas copy based upon a properly conceived selling plan is a perfectly legitimate and an extremely good copy method, copy based upon a lottery disguised as a “competition” is neither legitimate, nor, in my opinion, sound advertising. No real skill is called for. Such schemes simply pander to the gambling instinct. Though they may be framed so as to escape illegality, they are frankly immoral. On the ground of the public interest they ought not to be employed. That ought to be enough. As it is not, let them be condemned on other grounds. There is evidence for saying that they are rarely successful. They may cause a temporary rise in sales—little more. For every person who “wins” a prize, thousands are disappointed. Is this desirable, from the point of view of the advertiser merely? To have a product associated with disappointment does not sound a very attractive sales scheme. A competition scheme promoted by a commercial house may not be so questionable as one promoted by a newspaper on behalf of a hospital which provides less money for the

hospital than is paid away in prizes and newspaper advertisement space, but it is just as immoral in its conception. More than enough money is squandered in horse-racing and football betting without advertisers wilfully encouraging another form of gambling.

10. *Describing a Detail of the Product.*—An example of such copy is a series of advertisements which emphasises the strength of the back axle of a motor-lorry in order to sell the vehicle in question. Sometimes an advertiser will employ such copy in order to participate in the goodwill already promoted by the advertisements of the back axle themselves (for example), *i.e.* where the back axle has already been advertised by itself.

The method lends itself to all sorts of variations. For instance, needed common sense might be introduced into motor-car advertisements if the manufacturer of an inexpensive light car hit on the idea of selling the engine of the car particularly, and explaining that his car was cheap because unnecessary luxuriance in body-work had been avoided in order to keep the price down.

Economical people could be made to appreciate that, if you must buy an inexpensive car, it is better to have a thoroughly good engine which will get you up hills and costs little in upkeep,

than to have a cheaply produced engine and luxurious body-work. Another variation of the method was once used by a motor-lorry manufacturer who was a pioneer in fitting giant pneumatic tyres to such vehicles. Attractive copy appeared, showing how such equipment made for speed and safe transport of fragile articles. Yet another car advertiser used the method (which is particularly suitable to mechanical articles) to explain how easily his car was started—this before the days when self-starters were universal.

The method may be used, of course, in series, each advertisement taking a separate feature. A similar method was employed years ago by the writer to advertise Bergougnon Solid Tyres. The name sounded unwieldy, and was difficult to pronounce. During the preliminary investigations the fact was elicited that the tyres had been extensively used during the war on the wheels of big guns up to forty tons in weight. This fact was joyfully seized upon as providing a first-rate policy for the advertisements—far from an easy thing to find for motor tyres—and by a happy inspiration the name was abbreviated to B.G.—short for Bergougnon and Big Guns! Every advertisement emphasised the use to which the tyres had been put (with photographs of huge guns so equipped) with such headlines as “The

Tyres that carried the Guns," "The Tyres with the Forty-ton Guarantee," and so on.

11. *Copy based on Price.*—This copy method makes cheapness the principal appeal. Drapery sale announcements employ the method most widely. But, of course, many single articles are frequently advertised with cheapness as the chief feature. The method needs no explanation. It is to some extent an admission of failure, however, to decide that the article has no character but cheapness. This is a poor sales argument, and shows little perseverance on the part of the copywriter.

12. Advertisements which do nothing more than *offer a free booklet* about the manufacturers' product hardly come into the category of "selling plan" copy. This is an extremely effective method when the advertising appropriation is small. A very well-known piano house, for a period, employed no Press advertising except two-inch newspaper advertisements which simply offered a free booklet of advice on choosing a piano. The method has its uses. It also has a serious limitation inasmuch as it is difficult to make such advertisements possess any cumulative value or any prestige value. The method imposes severe restrictions. A series of such advertisements can promote little goodwill for the article. Public opinion about the article cannot be formed by

such copy. Cumulative value has been seen to be extremely important; consequently the method is not often advisable.

13. *Testimonial Copy* explains itself. It produces evidence of the worthiness of the article by incorporating letters written by users of it. All that need be said about it is that, of course, such letters must be genuine, unsolicited, and free from any kind of manipulation (other than the deletion, properly indicated, of irrelevant or verbose matter). No advertiser and no periodical ought to be allowed to interfere (except as above) with a letter written by a customer and published as part of an advertisement. That advertisers sometimes do alter such letters, procure them from doubtful sources in doubtful ways, and that newspapers have been known to attempt to alter them—all this is disgraceful. It is no use pretending that it does not occasionally occur.

14. *Pictorial Copy* gives greater attention to the illustrations used than to the words. The desirability of the goods may be shown by illustrations; or some more or less irrelevant picture may be used with a display of name and phrase. Whisky advertisers employ the method fairly extensively; for example, a picture of a pair of black and white dogs reminds the public that "Black and White" is the name of a whisky. Incidentally this particular brand, by the accident

of its name, is able to employ the method intelligently, and no doubt frequent pictures of black and white objects do impress this name more vividly than words alone would. The familiar figure of Johnny Walker is another example of the intelligent use of this method. Less intelligent use of the method is far more frequent however. The method lends itself to representations of Britannia with such captions as "The Spirit of Empire."

15. *Dialogue Copy* presents the case for the goods in the form of conversations. Drage's Simple System of buying furniture has been thus successfully presented. The difficulty of the method is obvious. A skilled dramatist would not find it easy to write dialogue which had to tell facts about merchandise and at the same time sound natural. Copywriters, necessarily less skilled in such technique, find it harder still. The dangers of the method may be illustrated by two examples :

"SCENE: A first-class railway carriage containing mother and daughter passing '.....' factory.

"*Child*: 'What does '.....' stand for?'

"*Mother*: '.....' is the quality mark for the goods made by 'R..... & Co.' in those big Mills, such as Sheets,

Casements, Cottons, Blankets, Flannelettes, Window Hollands, Poplins, Prints, Artificial Silks, Velveteens, Warp Sateens, Linings, and all sorts of other things for making garments worn by Men, Women, and Children all over the world."

And: Picture of smiling child above the following :

"This little Yorkshire lassie says: 'I do love Mummy to send me to '.....' to buy 'R.....' toilet things for her and Daddy.'"

"She says 'R.....' means 'R..... and L.....,' and her R..... Skin Cream and R..... Face Powder really do smell like r..... and l..... on her dressing-table. (I know now why she always looks so pretty.) And Daddy looks so smart after using his R..... Perfect Hair Cream. He says his R..... Shaving Stick is 'rippin', by Jove!' Last night Daddy stood before the fire and looked ever so wise. He said, 'Here's a bit of good advice, m'dear: Stick to T.....'s for C.....'s things—they're Yorkshire, and they're good.'

"Mammy says I was a little T.....'s customer directly I was born.

"When I'm big I'm going to send my little girl to T.....'s, just as Mammy does me."

So much for the fifteen forms which copy can assume. There is a little more still to be said about policy. Some of the fifteen forms suggested can, in certain circumstances, be combined and used more or less as one. In other circumstances, nearly all of them may represent a single copy policy. Let me try to make this a little clearer. Marketing has been defined as the whole routine of distributing merchandise. Merchandising (which may or may not include advertising) has been defined as that part of this routine which is concerned with providing material and plans which will assist the retailer to sell his stock; and advertising as any means employed to influence the public—usually confined to Press advertising, posters, and outdoor advertising generally, and postal advertising. There is necessity for a clearly defined policy in all these fields: a marketing policy, a merchandising policy, and an advertising policy. All of these, but particularly the last, will affect the copy policy employed. But it is conceivable that the copy policy *might* be separate from the others.

It might be decided to employ a particular advertising policy and then to use one (or more, combined) of the above fifteen forms to express that advertising policy. For example: the general marketing policy (stated in very simple terms, of course) might be to *reduce* the number of lines

manufactured by the firm. The merchandising policy would employ various detailed methods of procuring this end—such as printed matter which featured the standard (reduced) line much more prominently than the rest of the line, and so forth. The advertising policy would be to employ further detailed methods to the same end—such as concentration upon certain lines in the Press advertising. Then, when the copy policy had to be determined, several of the copy forms suggested could be used to express the general advertising policy. All this sounds complicated. There is no harm in that. Indeed, it is all for the best, because if it does sound complicated, time will be bestowed upon getting things straightened out before any advertising begins, and this is just what is needed. If the problem of successful advertising were always encountered in this way there would be less pointless haphazard advertising. Advertising is frequently regarded as a matter of single insertions. Any idea is seized upon, however silly and transient its nature, just because it is superficially clever, or tickles some one's fancy or vanity. This is absurd. Advertising is essentially a continuous process, and unless it is conceived and executed in this light failure is probable, and deserved.

When a clear advertising policy is indicated by

the nature of the product, a copy policy is usually not far off. For example, if the product is an article of food, an appeal to the appetite will most likely be the advertising policy adopted. That decided, a copy policy would not be difficult to find. But if the decision upon the right advertising policy is difficult to arrive at, an examination of the fifteen forms of copy suggested may help to discover it.

CHAPTER VI

THE FOURTH ESSENTIAL OF A GOOD ADVERTISEMENT: THE RIGHT HEADLINE

It will be convenient to consider headlines before discussing copy. The writing of headlines does not differ much from the writing of copy; the same principles apply; the nature of the appeals is much the same; many of the same devices employed to make advertisement copy effective, in a variety of ways, are also employed in writing headlines. But it will leave the ground clearer if headlines are dealt with separately than if they were included in the chapter on copy writing.

Almost any advertisement is improved by a headline. Where you see an advertisement with no headline, the reason is more likely to be that the copywriter could not think of a good one than that there was any purpose served by leaving the headline out. So if you are tempted to omit a headline, go back to work and think of one. And think long enough to hit on a real headline. Such headlines as "Distinction," "A Quality Product," and so forth are just so much rubbish. They do nothing whatever. They make no impression on the reader's mind. The function of the headline, simply stated, is to provoke favourable attention.

The interest may be produced in a number of ways, but they all come back to this in the end.

An advertisement is improved by a headline, because for every person who reads an advertisement, hundreds merely glance at it. Hence your advertisement ought to be so designed that it makes an impression of some kind even in a momentary glance. Either it must, by means of the headline and the name display, tell the reader something definite so that if he only glances he has learned something about the article advertised; or else the headline must provoke curiosity so strongly that the reader is compelled to read some of the copy beneath in order to satisfy his interest.

Sometimes it may be sufficient to condense the copy into one brief phrase and make that the headline. In most advertisements, however, it will be wiser to provoke interest so that the copy *must* be read at length.

A headline may take the form of an arresting statement, or of a question. Make no mistake: good headlines are exceedingly difficult to write. It is much more difficult to write a good headline than good copy. A headline is useless if it does not arrest. It ought to interrupt the reader. It ought to capture his interest so that he must seek to find out the full significance of the suggestion

the headline makes. The importance of headlines cannot be over-emphasised. The poverty of ideas and of phrase which characterises a very large number of the advertisements you see should not deceive you into a belief that any words are good enough to put at the head of your copy. Some advertisers seem to think so; but don't ever accept any idea only because many advertisers cling to it. They may be wrong, and it is far better to think things out for yourself than to accept what other people think.

Whenever you are tempted to let a headline go with some phrase you know in your heart to be less than the best that can be found, remember this: if your headline does not arrest the reader's attention, *he will not read a line of your copy*. And, of course, you must never forget that the only safe assumption for you, both as regards headline and copy, is that "they don't want to read it." Never get it into your head that the public is ever interested in advertisements.

As I said in the Introduction to this book, the way to acquire skill in advertisement writing is to study the art of writing: not to study other advertisements.

Similarly, when writing copy, the right way is to study the goods. Don't try to think of new and striking things to say: study the goods themselves, and if your study is really thorough

and if you have any gift for writing at all, the new and striking things will come naturally.

A headline that asks a question is often stronger than one that makes a statement. So, if you can, twist your thought into the form of a question. A question, by its very form, is more likely to provoke interest and curiosity than a statement. And though I have defined the function of a headline as to provoke favourable attention, remember the powerful interest of curiosity. Most people are curious, though most people will deny it.

A question-headline is especially provocative of curiosity if the question asked upsets a popular belief. As for instance :

“WHEN YOU FEEL ILL, IS IT SOMETHING
YOU HAVEN'T EATEN ?”

is a headline of great provocation, because many people would say to themselves, “I don't feel well. I must have eaten something that has disagreed with me.”

The example just quoted cuts across this popular belief with a new idea ; you may feel ill on account of something you haven't eaten. The headline goes as far as any headline can to compel the reader's interest. And it does this by provoking curiosity.

Similarly, the headline which said, underneath

an illustration of a girl tipping her head back, and smiling :

“CAN YOU SMILE WITH YOUR BACK
TEETH ?”

provoked interest and curiosity in a marked degree. You don't usually smile with your back teeth. But most people would like their back teeth to be as white as their front ones, so that they could smile with them ! Thus the headline almost obliged the reader to read the copy. This headline also told a story with great economy of words. It combined curiosity with an almost complete indication of what the copy was about. The reader understood at a glance that the selling point of the tooth-brush being advertised was that it reached and cleaned all the teeth in his head.

A headline in the form of a statement can, however, be very provocative of interest and curiosity. For instance, for a bituminous paint protective of all metal-work against rust, etc. :

“CORROSION—LEPROSY OF METAL”

puts an old idea into a new and arresting form. This headline suggests the need for protecting metal-work very economically. It thrusts home the danger of corrosion in metal by means of a startling comparison.

The whole art of writing headlines is the discovery of new and arresting ways to present old facts. This is largely the whole art of copy-writing too, of course. But copy can sometimes succeed if it expounds arguments in ordered and logical sequence without any very new and arresting phrases. Such copy is not the best copy, naturally; but it can be very good copy nevertheless.

Headlines must be better than this.

You cannot be told how to produce ideas. All that can be done is to quote some examples by way of showing the kind of ideas that make good headlines. There are two ways to set about writing headlines. One way is to capture your idea in the form of a headline, write it in that form, and then write the full copy.

The other way is to write the copy at length first, and then read it through either to discover some phrase in it which will itself make a good headline, or some phrase which can be shortened into a headline. Or the reading of the copy may suggest a phrase which will make a good headline.

Some men work one way, some the other.

Perhaps the best method is to adopt both ways, according to circumstances.

Some examples will now be quoted and briefly discussed. These have been picked more or less

at random, though each illustrates some point. When examples are picked out in this way, the accompanying discussion is bound to appear somewhat disjointed. This is intentional. The examples are not reproduced so that you may write headlines according to a pattern. Nor has any attempt been made to treat the subject analytically. It is believed that such treatment would make duller reading than the method here selected. This book does not set out to treat the subject analytically. It is primarily designed to make you think for yourself, not to do your thinking for you. It tries to be suggestive.

“SOMETHING A MAN WOULD NOT
TELL YOU”

as a headline for an advertisement of a toilet preparation for women, in a newspaper largely read by women, is strong for reasons too obvious to need explanation.

“THE WASTEFUL AND EXTRAVAGANT
SCHOOL OF PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE”

for a course in business training is another example of a headline which arrests attention, because it upsets a popular idea—that the only school in which business can be learned is the school of practical experience.

An example of a headline which condensed a

whole page of copy into three lines is provided by the following (underneath the name of the razor):

“ITS BLADE IS GUARANTEED TO LAST
FIVE YEARS AND IS BOTH STROPPED
AND RE-SET (HONED) AUTOMATICALLY
IN THE RAZOR'S OWN BOX.”

In this example no single-blade razor had hitherto been advertised which stropped and honed itself automatically. Hence, though a full statement was made in the headline, it was one which was likely to provoke interest and even curiosity. This was followed later by a headline:

“CAN YOU SHARPEN A PENCIL WITH
YOUR RAZOR AND THEN SHAVE WITH
IT?”

Putting the word “How” or “Why” before a headline will often strengthen it enormously. For instance, the bare statement:

“CUTEX IMPROVES THE NAILS”

is weak. Put the word “How” in front of it, and

“HOW CUTEX IMPROVES THE NAILS”

becomes an invitation to read. The one added word provokes interest at once.

“A BARBER'S RAZOR—BUT SAFE”

is an example of a headline which makes an appeal to prejudice—often a good method. Many men are conservative enough to prefer the old type of cut-throat razor. They have learned to use a razor of this shape and dislike the idea of using what they regard as the new-fangled, hoe-shape razor. Still they may be made to see the advantage of a razor with a safety guard. Hence the headline above; the razor was, of course, of the old shape.

Some words have association of their own which make them good words for headlines. Such words occur in the examples following:

“HELP! WHERE YOU NEED IT IN
YOUR PRINTING PROBLEM.”

“BEHOLD! A SECRET OF THE FIELDS.”

The word “help” is itself arresting (owing to its association), and many of us are disinclined to refuse help when it is proffered.

“Behold” is a startling word likely to rivet attention. Such words (you will be able to think of others for yourself) should not be abused. Don't use such words if the copy does not bear them out. You do no good by deceiving people in advertisements.

Avoid antagonising the reader. Such words as

"must" are inadvisable. Even such a headline as :

"EVERY BUSINESS MAN OUGHT TO
KNOW THESE FACTS"

may go a little too far.

"EVERY BUSINESS MAN WILL BE ABLE
TO SAVE MONEY AFTER READING THESE
FACTS"

would probably have been an improvement.

A headline which tells the reader something he is very familiar with can be strong. By this is meant a headline which confirms the reader in a belief, or which puts into words something he has often thought of himself.

This looks like a contradiction of what was said just now about the strength of a headline which *upsets* a popular belief. In reality the weak headlines are to be found amongst those which do neither one thing nor the other.

Examples of the confirming headline are :

"DO YOU FEEL SLEEPY AFTER LUNCH?"

"WHAT DO YOU FEEL LIKE ON MONDAYS?"

A great many people *do* feel sleepy after lunch : therefore the headline above is likely to interest them. Similarly, it is a popular idea that we feel tired on Mondays.

"WHY PAY A LAUNDRY TO WEAR OUT
YOUR TABLE-LINEN?"

"NO LAUNDRY BILLS FOR THE NEXT
TWENTY YEARS"

are examples of headlines which meet popular prejudice half-way. It is legitimate for the manufacturer of a washing-machine which treats delicate fabrics kindly to emphasise the heavy handedness of laundries. The second example above shows how an economy appeal can be given an arresting twist. Much more interest is provoked by "No laundry bills for the next twenty years" than would be provoked by "Save money on your washing."

The subject of headlines can be left here, with no more than a few brief conclusions.

The whole secret of headlines, I repeat, is a matter of finding an original way either of summing up the copy or of putting some question or some statement which, by reason of its incompleteness, obliges the reader to seek an answer to his thoughts within the copy. But if the question or statement *is* incomplete, it must provoke interest. A headline is not interesting merely because it is incomplete; it is then incomplete and nothing else. A headline, for instance, which consists simply of the first few words of the first sentence of the copy following

is useless unless these first few words are themselves of an arresting nature.

Remember that it is a lazy, harassed, public you address. It is a public disinclined to pay any attention to what you have to say. More, it is a public anxious to read the news or the stories or the articles beside which your advertisements appear—if you are even lucky enough to have procured position “next matter.” The people whose interest you are seeking to divert don’t want to pay any attention to you. Keep that constantly in mind. Never forget it. You will never produce a good headline unless you remember that “they don’t want to read it.”

CHAPTER VII

THE FIFTH ESSENTIAL: THE RIGHT ILLUSTRATION

ILLUSTRATIONS are a part of the sales argument, usually an essential part of it. They are, directly, the concern of the copywriter. Illustrations only come within the scope of this book from the copywriter’s point of view, however. Therefore the artistic form of illustrations will only be discussed briefly and in general. A whole book could be written about advertisement illustration in detail.

Almost any advertisement is impaired by a picture: and almost any advertisement is improved by an illustration. In other words, illustrations should illustrate. They may illustrate the argument in the copy, a selling point of some kind, or a situation described in the copy. They may illustrate, in some way, the quality of the article being advertised—by, for instance, showing it in appropriate surroundings, as when the quality of a brand of cigarettes is suggested by showing a silver box of them upon a table. An illustration will very often make a copy argument understandable at a glance. And you will frequently write your copy so that it may be capable of such illustration. There should be the

closest possible association between the copywriter and the advertisement designer, so that he fully understands the copywriter's intentions. Naturally, a designer skilled in the presentation of argument in pictorial form will be able to make helpful suggestions. Generally speaking, advertisements far too often contain pictures where they would be strengthened by containing illustrations, and this weakness may be traceable to lack of co-operation between copywriter and designer.

Nothing approaching full advantage is taken of the opportunities which exist for illustrations to assist the copy argument in advertisements. The interest of copy can be enormously strengthened by appropriate illustrations, not only because illustrations can make a point clear in a single glance, but also because they can help to *explain* the copy in an interesting way.

Thus illustrations can be dramatic. By dramatic I mean sudden, striking, impressive. They can rivet attention by the way they present a situation or a selling point.

For instance, mention was made in the chapter on the fifteen copy forms of a piano house which advertised a baby grand piano by offering to send a paper plan of the piano showing exactly how much space it would occupy in a room. This is an excellent example of what I mean. Properly

drawn, such an illustration could not only make the whole copy argument clear at a glance, it could present the argument in a most striking way. Imagine this illustration drawn in what I have called a dramatic fashion. It would, of course, show a husband and wife, having received the paper plan, laying it on the floor. But think how interesting the illustration could be made! A child could be introduced into the picture all agog with the novelty of the thing. Husband and wife could be all pleased surprise at the ease with which the piano could be fitted into a corner of the room. Drawn with intelligence and imagination this illustration could, by the expressions portrayed on three faces, suggest much of the excitement and pleasant anticipation of buying a piano. But to draw it thus needs, I think, co-operation between designer and copywriter. Having written your copy with this kind of illustration in mind, and having appreciated the enthusiasm which could be worked into the scene and felt some of it yourself, you must make the designer see the opportunity in the illustration. You must make the designer feel enthusiasm too. You must point out the dramatic possibilities of the thing. And you must make sure that the designer carries this out artistically. All the people in the little scene must be intent upon themselves and what they are doing. If one

of them is looking out of the illustration at the reader, the illustration becomes inartistic. That figure is playing to the gallery so to speak. This is bad manners. It also detracts from the illustration. All the interest should be concentrated on the situation itself.

This example has been discussed at some length so as to make the point taken clear. Similar opportunities for dramatic treatment exist in hundreds of other situations, some exceedingly simple, others as complicated as this one. This dramatic treatment can be made so interesting, and can illustrate so many selling points as well, that it deserves emphasis.

For instance, in the example just taken: if the piano were a particularly inexpensive one and likely to appeal chiefly to people of moderate means, this inexpensiveness could be suggested by the simplicity of the room and by the dress and appearance of the characters. Or, if the piano were a costly one, the room could be spacious and lofty, with rich curtains, and so on. Or it could be made to suggest culture by being furnished in the modern style, with twentieth-century fabrics and chairs and decoration. This would be according to the periodical in which the advertisement appeared.

It will be obvious that what is called prestige value can be given to an advertisement in a

marked degree by dramatic illustration. Let us discuss now an example of a simple illustration treated in a dramatic way. The presentation of almost any action, swift or graceful, gives an illustration this dramatic quality. To take a very simple instance, imagine an advertisement which offers a sample cake of toilet soap. This might be illustrated by a half-tone illustration of a bare hand and arm holding out the cake of soap toward the reader. By having this arm and hand drawn realistically, and by making the form of both beautiful and the skin white, several selling points could be illustrated. Action could be given to the illustration partly by the attitude of the hand—as though it were flung out in a generous gesture—and also by means of a dark shadow thrown by it. This dark shadow could emphasise the beauty of the hand and arm and also their whiteness. This beauty and this whiteness would suggest the quality of the soap. The very position of the hand, offering the cake of soap, would illustrate the fact that the copy held out an offer of a sample.

The example just described was chosen for discussion for its simplicity, you will remember. Yet there is minute detail to be attended to if such an illustration is to be really effective. And illustrations must be made effective, or they might just as well be omitted. A good many advertise-

ment illustrations, as they are done now, might be omitted. An effective illustration can tell a story or emphasise a selling point so as to claim attention more quickly than a headline. But let it be effective: if it is not effective, the words of a good headline will arrest a reader's attention and make a greater impression on his mind than a picture. Never forget that what applies to headlines applies to illustrations; they must arrest favourable attention.

So far, all that has been considered has been draughtsmanship—it may have been in line, or wash, or oils, or pencil, or chalk, and so on, according to circumstances.

A word ought to be said about photography as a medium of advertisement illustration. Pretty well everything said above applies equally to photography. There are one or two things which apply to photography in particular. In the hands of an artist a camera is a wonderfully flexible medium, capable of producing very beautiful effects. The limitations imposed by printing with ink on paper to reproduce camera prints are severe. Some of the finest work the camera can achieve is produced by means of what is known as a "soft focus" lens. This lens subdues (but does not destroy) irritating detail, so that beauty of form and light and distance and shadow (especially of light) are emphasised. At present no

printing-ink process reproduces "soft focus" camera pictures entirely satisfactorily. Much of the beauty of the original print is destroyed.

Hence photography is usually employed in advertising where exact and minute detail is required. For such a purpose the camera has obvious advantages. It is thus more of a mechanical medium than an artistic one, but useful.

One of the things a camera can do, with great ease, is to reproduce the effect of light, especially bright light, for example, the light playing upon and reflected from bright articles like glass and silverware. In skilled hands the camera is almost unrivalled for such work. Unhappily the beautiful work thus produced by skilled photographers is often completely ruined by the air-brush fiend, who blows a meaningless film of paint over the playing lights so wonderfully caught by the camera, thus destroying their beauty. Many blockmakers have an idea that photographs cannot be reproduced without a mass of air-brush retouching. This objection is often nonsense. In general, there should be as little retouching as possible. There are certain subjects, such as engineering catalogue work, to which the above does not apply, but that is not our concern here.

What was said in the early part of this chapter about dramatic illustrations applies equally when

photography is employed instead of draughtsmanship. The camera introduces additional difficulty.

Obviously if an illustration is to be photographic, and contains two or three figures, every one of the models must completely understand the necessity for the resulting print to possess dramatic interest. This is the difficulty referred to. Not one designer, but the photographer and all his models, must be made to understand what is being aimed at, and must act accordingly. And it needs skilled people, used to acting (preferably for the films), to pose naturally and "register" the appropriate expressions.

A reason often uppermost when photography is chosen as the medium for advertisement illustrations is that it will lend a realism and actuality to the illustration impossible to achieve in, for instance, a wash-drawing. This reason is to be distrusted. Some reasons for this have just been suggested. There are two others. First, a skilled draughtsman can produce a carefully finished wash-drawing which, for sheer realism, will beat a photograph. Such a drawing will very often reproduce the effect desired much more realistically, and will print better than a photograph. Secondly, so far as the public is concerned, it is largely a mistake to suppose that the average person can tell whether a half-tone is reproduced from a photograph or a wash-drawing. If you are

going to use a photographic illustration in the belief that the reader will be reassured because the illustration is obviously an actual photograph, be quite sure to say, very loud and clear, that it *is* an actual photograph. Otherwise most people will not realise that it is anything of the kind. And unless photography has, beyond question, advantages of its own apart from this one, do not use it unless you are quite sure that a wash-drawing would not reproduce more effectively.

Two devices may be discussed from the point of view of the assistance they lend illustrations in arresting attention. The first of these is a quality of photographic realism of technique. The public generally is interested¹ in a picture which is drawn with lifelike resemblance to the original. Popularly speaking, this is the public's favourite form of art. Paint a picture which is so realistic that, as a visitor to the Tate Gallery, looking at a picture of two calves in a stable, remarked in my hearing, "You could fair stroke 'em: that's what I call Art"—paint a picture like this and the popular verdict will be that it is Art with a capital A. Now, whatever you may privately think of this, there is a lesson here for you as an advertising man. This kind of technique is liked. The "art" editors of Christmas coloured supple-

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ments love it. It is a form of technique which could be more frequently employed in advertisements than at present. An illustration of this nature does not arrest attention only because it is popular: if you have your illustration of a package, or an article in use, so drawn that it is exceedingly realistic, the illustration will fairly leap out of the page. People will say, "Good heavens, you could almost pick it up." You have their attention.

You may think that this kind of drawing is desperately dull. You may think it is devoid of all artistic interest. So it may be; but the general public does not think so.

The second device mentioned above is nearly the opposite of the one just considered. It is novelty of technique. A really unusual form of drawing will also arrest attention. Naturally, this cannot be discussed at any length, because the whole interest of this kind of drawing lies in its individuality. It must be as different as possible from the general run of advertisement illustrations. As we are not discussing the technique of illustrations in detail (this lying within the province of the commercial designer), the device of novelty of technique must be mentioned only as one of the ways of arresting attention.

Of course, this kind of illustration, intelligently employed, is the more interesting of the

two. It has character and artistic interest. But be sure, when you do employ it, that it will interest the public to whom you are appealing. Don't let yourself imagine that because it interests you, as an advertising man, it must also be interesting to the public.

There is a lot of what may be called "pretty advertising" which delights advertising men, and, in my opinion, deceives many of them.

Ornamented drop initial letters, fancy hand-drawn lettering, new designs in type faces, some decorative borders, many carefully balanced layouts with little blocks of type-matter carefully arranged, fanciful name blocks—all these are employed by advertising men to give what they call a "quality atmosphere" to their advertisements, the intention being that this atmosphere of quality will surround the article advertised. Beware of thinking any such thing. You may be keenly interested in type design and printers' flowers and ornaments; you may, and indeed ought to have studied them. By all means use types and flowers which are comely. Encourage the use of types the design of which is founded on the beautiful productions of the master type-founders of the sixteenth and seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Do this because in this way advertisements may thus be beautiful things in

themselves. But do not imagine that such advertisements will appeal to the eyes of the public in the same way that they appeal to your eyes. You appreciate them. They are beautiful to you because you have a trained eye. Your taste is educated. You perceive the pleasantness and interest of such designs. The public sees nothing consciously of the kind. Its taste is not educated. It knows so little about type design that the average person can see no essential difference between a beautiful type-face like Garamond (the type you are reading), and a hideous one like Modern Roman. Hence that atmosphere of quality just mentioned will not form a halo round the article advertised.

Mind, I am not arguing against the employment of well-designed type and orderly layouts and beautiful ornaments. Far from it. Too many advertisements are crude and ugly and blatant where they could, with very little pains, and great advantage, be converted into restrained and comely announcements. And many of them would, thus, have added attention-value bestowed upon them. All I say is, don't run away with the idea that what spells quality to your trained taste in this matter will spell quality to a public which, even though cultured in other respects, is likely to be ignorant in this. Remember the Clapton households and the narrow

streets with lace curtains and plush furniture and geraniums in the windows.

Naturally, with an article sold chiefly to educated people through the pages of what are called "class papers,"¹ the employment of ornament in good taste is appropriate. An eye which is appreciative of good design in the everyday things of life—wall-papers, pottery, jewellery, and so forth—cannot unreasonably be expected to be appreciative of good design in lettering, printers' ornaments, and the like. But, however true this may be, and I doubt whether it is wholly true, you should not make it an excuse for laziness. In other words, don't get it into your head that your advertisement is so designed as to convey quality unmistakably, and that it will receive attention for that reason alone. The way to convey the quality of the article to the reader's mind is to write the copy so that he *must* appreciate its quality. The illustration and the layout design are the copywriter's accessories—nothing more.

Let it be emphasised again that the education of public taste in advertisement design and all that is implied in that phrase (I mean in the production of well-designed labels, packages, letter-

¹ There are many deplorable definitions like this in advertising, but the customary jargon sometimes makes for clarity in discussion.

ing and type, posters, the shape and colouring of jars, and so on) is highly desirable. It is a work which advertising men ought to interest themselves in, because they can be an enormous influence for good in this direction. What has been said about "pretty advertising" has been said solely because there is a tendency to take too much for granted as regards the public's appreciation of this kind of advertising.

Generally speaking, there is good reason why all art-work in advertising should be as good as competent artists, decently paid and sympathetically treated, can make it. Illustrations, of whatever nature, should be competently drawn. The better drawn they are, the wider the appeal they must make, within sane limits. Within these limits, competent draughtsmanship, while it may be overlooked by many (unhappily), can offend no one. Incompetent draughtsmanship may offend some. Advertisements should offend nobody.

The fuss many advertisers make about the cost of advertisement illustration shows an amazing lack of imagination. It would be unbelievable, if it were not met with every day, that advertisers should, with apparent willingness, pay over a thousand pounds for a page of white space in a newspaper, for example, and then object strenuously to paying a tenth of that sum for the

illustrations to be used in it. A thousand pounds spent on a newspaper page advertisement¹ is simply, so far as the isolated page is concerned, a thousand pounds spent on *an opportunity* to place a message before the public. Just think of the futility of wrangling about a few pounds spent on ensuring that that message shall be as effective as it can be made!

In point of practical fact, 10 per cent. on the cost of the space to be used in the Press is an ample margin usually for illustrations, type settings, and zincos and electrotypes combined, if the campaign is one of any size. Yet it is known from experience that advertisers often think this figure too high.

The effectiveness of much advertising depends, in large degree, upon the effectiveness of the art-work employed. The effectiveness of all art-work depends upon the skill and originality of the draughtsman. It cannot be expected that men of originality and skill will be persuaded to turn their talent toward advertisement design unless they are paid well and accorded decent treatment.

A common practice in advertising is to ex-

¹ Of course, advertising ought not really to be discussed in relation to single pages like this, but such an example points the argument. It is only put forward in this way.

peet commercial draughtsmen to execute rough sketches free, especially if they are commissioned to do the finished work on any roughs approved. They are then paid, and sometimes quite well paid, for their finished work. It has been pointed out by one distinguished worker in advertising that far better work would be done if the direct reverse of this usual arrangement were adopted.

Much the most valuable feature of a rough advertisement sketch, if it is usable at all, is the *idea* contained in it. This is the pattern, so to speak. It may take a draughtsman days of hard thinking to produce an effective idea: it will take him only hours to draw it in finished form. Ideas are what count. Ideas are what make advertisement illustrations effective. Consequently it should be ideas that are highly paid for. In other words, the advertiser's attitude ought to be that he will pay highly for all rough sketches—for the ideas—and pay the artist only a few guineas for completing his ideas in finished form. If this practice became usual, there would be more originality than there is now in advertisement illustration. The objection may be made that a really clever idea may not be the work of days of hard thinking, as I have suggested, but may come in a flash of inspiration. Quite true. But if it does so come, this is either because the draughtsman is a man of

long experience,¹ or because he is a genius. In either event he deserves to be paid highly.

LAYOUT

So far, the word "illustration" has been used as meaning a picture with a story in it. It has a broader meaning than this: any layout, even one with a plain border and no picture, can illustrate the copy. Indeed, it is not a good layout if it does not. To illustrate means "Make clear, explaining, make clear by examples; elucidate by drawings."² Type makes advertisement copy clearer than handwriting. Type well arranged makes advertisement copy clearer still. Hence, in a broad sense, type and layout illustrate an argument. They present the argument in diagrammatic form. Passages in the argument of especial importance are set in larger type than the rest. Points of especial interest are emphasised by means of bold sub-headlines. Now layout and

¹ You remember Whistler's witty retort to the cross-examining counsel. Whistler had admitted taking two days to paint his nocturne of fireworks at Cremorne. The price of the picture was two hundred guineas. "Oh! two days," said the Attorney-General; "the labour of two days, then, is that for which you ask two hundred guineas!"

"No; I ask it for the knowledge of a lifetime."

² *Oxford Dictionary* (concise edition).

type, as with illustrations, will only be discussed from the copywriter's point of view; but as copy is greatly influenced by layout, there will be some details to consider. Layout comes before type; and purely from a copywriting point of view there will be need for very little discussion of type. A practical copywriter ought to have a layout form more or less definitely in mind *as he writes*. It will help the layout man enormously if he has. Good copy ought to be easy to lay out. It is a sign of incompleteness of experience if a man's copy, good as it may be, is difficult to arrange in type.

Generally speaking, it is well for a layout to avoid a rectangular form. Newspapers and magazines are set up in straight columns with vertical rules dividing them. News headings are, of course, set at right angles. This is abundantly obvious. What is not so obvious, apparently, is that an advertisement which avoids vertical rules and headlines or top-pieces at right angles will stand out more clearly than one whose shape runs parallel at sides and top to the editorial matter beside which it appears. There is another reason for avoiding rectangular shape: a great many other advertisements are rectangular, hence your advertisement will be cut off from the others if it is unevenly shaped in some way. A curve at top and bottom makes your advertise-

ment an island of attention in a sea of distraction. There will be no danger of part of your advertisement being attached to some other advertisement.

Remember that for the most part, the men who make up the advertisements in a periodical do not prepare their make-up with actual proofs of advertisements. If they did, the advertisement columns of the Press would be much more effectively displayed than they are now.

There is always some danger, therefore, that unless your advertisement is self-contained, part of it may, to the casual eye, appear to belong to a neighbour above or below. Or something in it may seem to point to an advertisement above or below or on one side of it. This is likely to happen when a layout is so poorly designed that it is really a picture and some type-matter. The two must be united. They must be joined together so that no man may put them asunder. This can be achieved by, for instance, letting some part of the picture drop down out of its frame or rectangle into the type display underneath. A rectangular picture is always to be avoided unless it is very definitely united with the copy by some device or other. In a full page the necessity for this is not so great, of course. But even here it will help if some device is used

to lead the eye down from the illustration to the headline. More as to this presently.

To go back to shapes again : a curve has been suggested as a way of cutting your advertisement off from others. This curve may be part of the border or top- or tail-piece. Or, when there must be especial economy of space, the headline itself may be lettered in a curve. An oval or ellipse or circle is a remarkably good shape to adopt, especially for a small space. A series of quarter double-column spaces gained considerable prominence some years ago by being set with borders intentionally just off the square.

The great thing is to get an irregular shape for the top and bottom of the advertisement, and, if possible, an irregular shape for the sides as well. I know this sometimes makes it impossible to use pretty printers' flower borders. But there is no reason at all why an irregular shape should be an ugly shape. Nor is there any reason why it should be "spotty" or haphazard.

A good layout must be orderly. It must be planned. It must marshal the argument. A layout which sets the eye dodging "up and down and to and fro" can ruin even a well-presented case. The eye should go unhesitatingly to the first sentence (there should be no doubt about which *is* the opening sentence), and from there onward the layout should guide the eye from point to

point. The copy must not let the attention wander. The layout must not let the eye wander. More : the layout must say, "Here is where you go on ; doesn't it look interesting ?"

Special paragraphs of importance—as, for instance, a coupon or free offer at the foot—can be so placed by ingenious layout that the eye is led down to them by an unseen arrow.

Many years ago some genius discovered that a printers' fist (a pointing hand) would make people read a particular paragraph which it was important should not be missed. When printers' fists became common, the Scrubbs' Ammonia people elongated the fist into a whole arm. This device is evidently regarded with affection ; it is still used. Then the arrow came into fashion. And this, too, went to great lengths, and even curves. Nowadays the layout man declares with the psalmist, "In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird," and fists and arrows are no more seen. They have become invisible, but none the less effective. By arrangements of shapes and headlines, and other devices, the eye is led unconsciously to the place where the layout man wants it to rest.

There are layout devices which will ensure that any paragraph of especial importance will be seen and read. A displayed headline is one. A displayed footline is another. Sub-headlines

set in bolder type than the text are yet another. Less obvious than these is the paragraph which is boxed in by a rectangle of printers' rules. A paragraph in a box is always read, even if nothing else is. A few lines set underneath an illustration will also *always* be read; they are irresistible. It has been found, too, that if a booklet or sample is being offered, the number of replies received will be definitely increased if a hand is drawn holding out the thing offered. When any such offer is made, too, a coupon will always increase the replies. There is, I think, a perfectly understandable reason for this; but coupons have a chapter to themselves later on. There is only one more detail to consider as regards layout: the use of name-plates. A name-plate displays the name of the product advertised in a particular fashion, as distinct from merely setting the name in type. It uses lettering of a special shape, sometimes with a scroll or an elongated tail to one of the letters, and so on. Sometimes type is tortured into a name-plate by having the first letter and the last letter a size larger than the rest. Advertisers are apt to attach importance to name-plates. They have serious disadvantages, however. To begin with, hardly any name-plate is as easy to read as type. If a name-plate is insisted upon, the more it resembles plain type the better it is likely to be. A name-plate can be plain type and still

possess distinctive character if a scroll or other special shape surrounds the type name. The eye is accustomed to reading type beyond anything else. Formerly, when the use of type was first invented, the best type faces were founded upon the beautiful manuscript letters which they were gradually displacing. Type had to be beautiful, then, because it was competing with hand-lettering. Then, as printing improved and this competition ceased, type design became debased. Crude and hideous faces came into use.

Within the last thirty or forty years there has been a revival of type design. And to-day the most beautiful faces are those which reveal, to the skilled eye, the tradition of the drawn letter. So beautiful are some of these type faces (and a type face cannot be beautiful without being legible) that the best hand-drawn lettering is little better than type. Much, perhaps most, hand-drawn lettering is not as good. When it departs from a type character, it usually ceases to be beautiful and certainly becomes illegible. There are only a few letterists who are craftsmen enough to go right back to the original hand-lettering for their inspiration. For the most part, letterists are ignorant of the traditions of their craft, and think that lettering is merely twisting a type face into some perverted shape.

Name-plates designed by such ill-informed

workmen are liable to be ugly. A name-plate ought to be as easy to read as possible ; nothing should interfere with that legibility. Advertisers are inclined to attach importance to name-plates for two chief reasons. First, that the public will be likely to recognise a name-plate through its familiarity. This is not wholly an advantage, however. It may be an improvement sometimes for the name display to take on a new form. It will be refreshingly novel thus.

The second reason advanced is that a particular form of name display gives continuity to successive schemes of advertisement. If this continuity is to depend only on the name display, however, it won't amount to much.

Finally, an unchanging name display may go out of fashion. The lettering chosen may become obsolete, and look ugly to modern eyes. Then, if one form of name display has been used for many years, the advertiser is almost sure to be unduly attached to it and part from it with a wrench. You may see, in almost any periodical you care to pick up, well-displayed advertisements whose whole appearance and character is largely ruined because the advertiser has insisted upon the incorporation of an ugly name-plate. Advertisements ought to have character and originality ; but they will always be improved if the *whole* layout expresses character rather than

the mere display of the name. Of course, the copy must have character of its own.

TYPE

Purely from the copywriter's point of view, there is little to be said about type. What needs to be borne in mind is this. The average eye is untrained and uneducated as regards type. It does not perceive beauty in a type face, as the trained eye of the advertising man perceives it, any more than an old maid could perceive the points of a prize bull-terrier as a dog fancier sees them. Added to this, the average eye is accustomed to read old-style roman and modern roman more frequently than any other type face. Hence these type faces are the most *easily* read by most people. Though the public does not realise it, the modern roman letter (and practically any variation of it) is ugly. Hence there is good reason for avoiding it. It is less easy to read than old-style roman, too.

But, since the old-style roman letter is more frequently met with than any other letter, this is the type most legible to the average eye, and this is the best type for all advertisement matter unless there is a very good reason for employing some other. There are many variations of the old-style roman letter to choose from, nearly

all of them beautiful and legible, and nearly all of them straightforward. To employ some fanciful version (or perversion) of the old-style roman letter in the belief that it will convey an impression of quality is not one of the reasons mentioned above as justification for departure from the rule suggested. It is a bad reason in two ways. First, it is bad because it exists principally in the minds of advertising men only. Secondly, it is bad because the right way to convey an impression of quality is by the character of the copy. If the copy lacks this character, it is poor copy, and no type face will redeem it. You might as well seek to bolster up the character of a human weakling by dressing him in spats.

If the copy in your advertisement is very brief indeed, this may be a reason for using a bold face type instead of old-style roman in some form. But, even here, it is a mistake to assume that blackness necessarily means prominence. There is value in contrast. Type can whisper, as it were, just as effectively as it can shout. In a world of clamour, quietness and restraint have genuine power to impress. Type which is used with any consideration except its legibility is apt to bawl or mumble. Neither is effective in type display, as neither is effective in speech. There is a middle register in the voice which, in most circum-

stances, is the pleasantest to listen to and the most effective to convey the speaker's ideas. Similarly with type. To use a bold face type (really designed to gain attention for display lines) as a body-type for text is to pervert an effective medium of expression. It puts a useful and carefully planned design to a wrong purpose. It is ineffective, therefore.

When your copy is of any length, all the reasons above apply with added force, and there are additional reasons. Long copy must hold the reader's interest and attention. Hence the type used must be especially legible.

Also, copy of such length usually has what, for want of a better name, must be called a literary form. Hence its type-dress should have a literary form too. In other words, the copy will be assisted by being set in the style usually employed in books and magazines, *i.e.* old-style roman. Imagine an essay possessing literary grace, or a poem, set in Cheltenham bold condensed! You see the point? It would be painful to read: even a Hoxton housewife would sense something amiss.

All this must not be taken to mean that, in my opinion, there are no good type faces beyond old-style roman. There are plenty. It will be safe to avoid any type face designed during the nineteenth century. But, more recently, many very

beautiful type faces indeed have been cast. For instance: Plantin monotype, Cloister, Goudy, Cochin, Garamond, to name only a few examples. Most of these are available in bold form also, for headlines only. The Caslon old-style roman letter is still probably the finest of all, however. A design does not endure virtually unchanged for two hundred years without good reason.

CHAPTER VIII

ADVERTISEMENT WRITING

Two considerations transcend all others in the writing of advertisement copy. Copy must have a defined policy, and that policy must never be lost sight of. Nor may it be departed from without reconsideration of the whole advertising campaign. That is, no merely clever idea, no matter how attractive it may appear, must be allowed to break the continuity of the copy. Secondly, copy must have character, it must have originality, it must be individual. This second consideration will be dealt with presently.

The importance of copy policy has been discussed already. The selling points possessed by the merchandise in question will inspire the copy policy. These selling points must be reviewed (all the better if they are set down on paper), and they must be examined and discussed in relation to the probable reasons for which the public will prefer the article in question before similar articles.

The basis of all sound advertisement copy is facts. The recipe for what is called "punch" in copy is facts. Without facts, copy cannot be actively convincing. With facts, it can hardly help being convincing.

No matter whether the copy is written so as to appeal to the reason of practical people or the emotions of sentimental people, facts should be its basis. No matter whether the copy is straightforward information about the goods or whether it is prestige copy which attempts to sell the goods by emphasising the importance of the firm that makes them, facts should be its basis. Of course, persuasiveness is of great importance. But facts are the recipe for persuasiveness too.

Inexperienced copy can always be detected. The unskilled copywriter (and sometimes the lazy copywriter) substitutes his opinions for facts. Opinions, however emphatic, do not make effective copy. Opinions are merely bias. They are suspect. Evidence is what you want—facts. Opinions lead to adjectives. Copy is effective in inverse ratio to the number of adjectives it contains. Nouns and verbs make advertisement copy convincing and active, not adjectives. When you have written a piece of copy, read it through to see how many adjectives it contains. Nearly all of them can be crossed out with advantage.

As an example of opinions and adjectives *versus* facts, compare the following :

“ This orange cordial has a wholesome, delicious flavour. It is generously flavoured with luscious, juicy oranges and the purest sugar.”

Now all this may be perfectly true. It may even be said to contain facts. But the facts are presented really in the form of the writer's opinions. He may think the flavour delicious. He may consider the flavour generous. What he thinks is not evidence, however.

Now :

“ Five ripe oranges are used to flavour each bottle of this cordial, and two ounces of cane sugar.”

The examples have simply been invented as illustrations, the proportions in the second example may be quite wrong ; but is there any question as to which is the better method ?

Again :

“ Berger Paints are of such fine quality, so economical and so enduring that the greatest West End hotels select them. They select them because Berger colours are fadeless and lasting, because they are glossy and fresh-looking always.”

Or :

“ You can imagine the trouble a West End hotel will take before it chooses paints. If ever paint is put to the test, it is here. Here must be colour. Here must be brilliance, contrasts,

harmonies, such as will delight the eye and fulfil the expectations of all who move in these luxurious rooms.

"In a hotel all things must be bright and beautiful. And the splendour must endure. The white must remain white, the gloss must glisten, the colours retain their freshness, this year and next year—and the year after that.

"That is why the Grand Hotel chose Berger Paints. That is why the Hotel Victoria chose Berger Paints. That is why the Hotel Metropole chose Berger Paints. And Frascati, and the Coliseum, and the Palladium, and the St. Martin's and Drury Lane. In your own house, now—isn't it clear *you* ought to choose Berger Paints?"

You will notice that this second example is not overburdened with adjectives. It has another source of strength: none of the adjectives is applied to the article advertised. The qualities of the paint are suggested by inference. The copy states the qualities good paint should possess, and implies that Berger Paints have these qualities.

You will also notice the strength of the repetition at the end. The introduction of the names of the restaurant and theatres at the end (as

against hotels) was justified by the impressiveness of the long list of names. Economy of words was effected by putting the name of an *obvious* theatre first. There was no need to use the word theatre, as there would have been if St. Martin's had been put first in the list. Thus one word was saved.

Now, let examples be left for a moment. Since facts, and they should always be specific facts, are the basis of effective copy, how to obtain these facts needs discussion.

Usually you will get them from the client for whom you are working. You will talk to him. Indeed, it will usually be necessary to cross-examine him. Facts are not so easily obtained as you might think. For one thing, manufacturers do not always appreciate their importance in copy. Many of them actually like high-sounding generalities better than facts. This unfortunate preference needs to be discouraged.

Even when the client does understand the need for facts, they are not always easily elicited. He is very close to his business, and apt to overlook important points. Much of the value of the copy-writer lies in his ability to approach his work from an outside point of view. He represents the public. He is not obsessed with trade customs and prejudices. His point of view is new and fresh. Often a manufacturer is so close to his business that he overlooks brilliant selling points.

He is accustomed to them. They are not new to him, and he does not understand that they may be new to the public outside.

A party of advertising men was once going over a brewery. They were being shown all the different processes. Crossing a yard from one building to another, one of them noticed a small building which none of them had entered. "What's that?" he asked. "Oh, that's only the sterilising plant where all the bottles are sterilised before being refilled! Every brewer does that, of course." And a really important selling point was thus dismissed as *uninteresting*!

One way to get a taciturn manufacturer to talk is to shock him with a suggestion. A copywriter was once in difficulties with such a man. His client was stoutly maintaining that his product really was exactly the same in all respects as his competitor's. "Then if I want a hundred gallons of white paint I might as well get it from?" said the copy man in desperation. "Good lord, no! That fellow's paint is full of" I forget exactly what it was full of; but the facts came out at last.

Very frequently you will find that the manufacturer's workmen, full of pride in their work, will supply facts much more readily, in greater detail, and of a more interesting kind, than their employer.

Examples within my own experience will be inevitable in this chapter. They are only introduced because, naturally, I know more about my own work than any one else's.

A few years ago I had a booklet to do for a collar-manufacturing firm. Now, on the face of it, one linen collar is very much like another. There doesn't seem a great deal to say about a collar. Not an easy thing to enthuse about. Well, I went down to the factory to see linen collars being made, without any hope that it would do much good.

But when I got there I found as works manager one of the most charming old men I have ever met. He had been with the firm all his life. It was impossible to talk to him for ten minutes without absorbing some of the old chap's veneration for his work and his firm. He believed there was no firm on earth as good as his, and it wasn't long before I believed it too.

He took me over the factory and showed me everything. He told me how long all the work-people had been there, and most of them had spent a good part of their lives at the work. After that we adjourned to his office and talked about the firm, and he told me all sorts of most interesting things about the history of the firm. How they had made collars for Mr. Gladstone. They fastened at the back, with tapes! And they

had a special seam in the front so as to give Mr. Gladstone full play when making his energetic speeches in the House of Commons. And how one day the firm received an order from a hosier's in Jermyn Street for some collars for "two slim lads," who later turned out to be the Duke of Clarence and the present King. And many other interesting things. Do you think it was difficult to write that booklet after that? Of course not! We wrote it together, that old factory manager and I, and called it *A History of the Collar*.

Never let yourself believe that any article is the same as its competitor. There is always some fact—usually a whole lot of facts—which is different, or which no one else has emphasised. It doesn't matter whether a fact really *is* new. If it has not been used, it is as good as new. It will not always be easy to persuade your client of this, but it is true.

Much the best copy is that which is written from direct observation and experience and enthusiasm. As I said just now, what advertising copy stands most in need of to-day is character. Advertisement copy is too much alike. The way it is displayed gives an impression of variety, but it is deplorable that copy should have so little backbone that it needs to depend so much upon display for individuality. It ought to be individual itself. It ought to have character of its own.

The sameness and lack of originality of most copy are due to too many agencies and manufacturers wanting their advertisements to be like other advertisements. Copy managers seem to be afraid of anything strikingly new. They keep too rigidly to certain rules. And it is a common experience to hear manufacturers express admiration for some series of advertisements they have seen, and ask for their advertisements to follow similar lines.

Again, copywriters are too often told to work from old printed matter instead of from their own personal observation of the goods. There cannot be much character or individuality in copy which is merely a rehash of old printed matter consisting of some one else's ideas. Creative work is impossible without the inspiration of direct observation assisted by imagination and inventiveness. Advertisement copy is creative work, and the same rule applies. Read the wretched stuff which used to be turned out by imitators of the late John O. Powers, and imitations of the work of Haslam Mills, and the point needs no further labouring.

For two other reasons, direct observation is the best basis for copy: you ought to feel the inspiration of the artist in what you write. If you are asked to rehash some one else's work, this will kill most of your inspiration at the outset.

In any event, if you are to be good at your work, you must possess a sense of touch with your readers, and you must be conscientious in what you write. You will write the better, therefore, if you have fully satisfied yourself by personal experience beforehand.

Your judgment may need to be assisted. Discover all the selling points you can from direct observation and inquiry, and then go to your copy chief. If he is wise, he will not tell you *how* to write the copy: he will tell you which points are the more important ones, and leave you to produce your own copy in your own characteristic way. Only thus will you succeed in producing fresh individual work.

It is easy to see that if you have copy to write for bread, for instance, you will produce much more original, more enthusiastic copy, copy with far more character in it, if you describe the texture of the loaf after cutting it, the flavour of it after tasting it, the satisfaction of it after eating it, the colour and look and crispness of it in the words which seem to you genuinely descriptive of what you are actually seeing. Of course, you ought to be told about the technicalities, too: the grades of flour and the blending, and so forth. But you should *see* the flour, handle it, and see all the processes of baking, so that you may have the opportunity, from observation, of discovering

all the selling points available, and perhaps a new one that had so far escaped every one else. You cannot expect to get any very new angle of view from work which is merely a paraphrase of other work previously done.

I dwell at length on these points because they are a very firm conviction of mine. Never willingly work in any other way yourself if the direct way is feasible.

The fact remains that instances do occur when the direct method cannot be employed. You may have, for example, a perfectly good treatment of some kind to describe. You cannot, in many circumstances, undergo the treatment yourself. You will have to depend entirely upon a client's instructions; there will be no other way. You will have to talk to him at length about it, make your own notes, select what occurs to you as the more striking features of the treatment, and do your work accordingly.

You are almost certain to encounter difficulties in such circumstances. You are not likely to succeed in extracting all you want from the client, especially if the treatment has been before the public for some time. There is a great deal in the contention already made that the proprietor is too closely in touch with his own goods or service. He can't help himself. He

continually wants his advertising to be new. He is absurdly afraid of repetition, as a rule.

The result of this is that points originally used to describe his goods or his service come to be discarded as old, stale, too familiar. In course of years it may quite easily happen that perfectly good selling points are thus discarded one by one, until the existing advertising is positively anæmic. The proprietor does not perceive this for two reasons. He dislikes using old arguments, because he is afraid the public will be uninterested. And because he himself knows all those perfectly sound arguments which are never used to-day, he assumes that the public knows them too. Of course, he is wrong. But it is very difficult to persuade him that he is wrong. There is no need to go further here into why he is wrong, and how much better advertising would be if it assumed complete ignorance of the goods on the part of the public. The only point I want to make is that when you find yourself in this kind of difficulty, there is a perfectly easy way out of it which may not have occurred to you. It is this: ask your client to produce his scrap books containing some of the really old advertisements and printed matter, the earlier the better. It is long odds that you will find here a little gold-mine of information—all sorts of selling points which have long since disappeared from the advertising. It is a

small suggestion, and perhaps a rather obvious one; it may be worth remembering, all the same.

One thing more needs to be said about the discovery of selling points. It is of great importance. Having made notes of all the selling points the article possesses, you must now *select* those to be used. Some will need to be discarded. Of course, while you are engaged in eliciting selling points, you will continually be on the look out for the really striking ones. Some selling points you will merely note down. The striking ones you will fasten upon while in conversation with your client and his workpeople, so as to obtain every possible scrap of information about them and bearing upon them. Never forget that advertisement copy is rooted in human nature. The selling points you need to discover are those which will make striking copy, picturesque copy, dramatic copy, copy capable of an emotional twist. This is where the need for a "nose for news" comes in. Always have in mind the public's probable point of view. Think out (if market research has not supplied data on the point) *why* the public will buy the article in question. If you can decide this, the selection of the right selling points from the material available will be made easier. Think in terms of the public. Do not pay too much attention to what your client thinks. He may believe that the size

of his factory is of paramount importance. Whereas the public will not care a continental about the size of his factory. There is nothing hypnotic about a factory. The product is what the public cares about, not the size of the factory where it is made.

Now it may be that the actual selling points of the article itself will decide the copy policy. Or marketing considerations may decide it. Or there may be some fundamental appeal which will sell the article more successfully than any detailed description of it.

Let these two possibilities be made clear by examples. An instance of marketing policy governing copy policy has already been given.¹

A vacuum-cleaner might be advertised by description of its individual points of advantage over competitors. Description of its constructional superiority and efficiency might make a complete case in its favour.

On the other hand, as suggested before, the main copy policy for a vacuum-cleaner might take for emphasis the basic idea of cleanliness in the home. The copy might describe how dust and dirt are *removed* in a vacuum-cleaner; not merely stirred up with brooms or flicked off shelves with dusters, but actually carried right

¹ Cf. pp. 60, 61 *et seq.*

out of the house, making it really clean and really healthy to live in.

Understand, a copy policy is not the same thing as a copy angle.

The copy policy is the central dominating purpose of the advertising. Copy angles are sought to present this purpose in new and interesting ways.

In the first example above, for instance, the copy policy would be to emphasise continually some one or two features of especial importance in the construction of the vacuum-cleaner. Thus this particular cleaner would become known as possessing these features, and the advantages of them would be appreciated.¹

The different devices used to emphasise these advantages would be copy angles.

In the second example the dominating copy policy would be, not to sell a vacuum-cleaner, but to sell cleanliness and health. The different situations devised and the different methods of playing upon this idea would, again, be copy angles.

The importance of policy in advertising has had a whole chapter devoted to it already. The subject may be left with one more reminder. Keep to the policy. Until and unless it is proved

¹ Cf. "The Hoover," which "beats as it sweeps as it suction cleans."

wrong, do not depart from it. Do not allow any whim or caprice of your client or any isolated idea, however clever, to cause you to forsake it. No, not even for a single advertisement. You must keep on persistently at the same points again and again, or you will never hammer them into the thick head of the public.

Now, consider for a moment what the object of an advertisement is. Its object is, in one way or another, to assist the sale of merchandise. This is not an easy matter.

The task of a newspaper leader writer is simple by comparison. His job is to create public opinion, to make people think in a particular way. But they are rarely asked to act; they don't have to be induced to read something they would prefer to pass over; they don't have to learn the name of a particular article; they are not asked to carry that name in their heads till next they enter a shop where the article is for sale; they are not asked to put their hands in their pockets and bring out hard-earned money to pay for it, and keep to their resolution in the face of the blandishments of a shopkeeper who may try to steal the advertiser's custom by persuading them to have something "just as good" (*sic*) for less money.

Most advertisements (not quite all, though) must do all these things. Before coming to the details of how to achieve these objects, it will be

well to point out one or two exceptions. It would not be quite true to say that the object of an advertisement is simply to sell goods. Its object might be to promote prestige for a manufacturing firm or a shop, and thus only indirectly to sell goods. Selfridge & Company Ltd., when first it opened, conducted a magnificent prestige campaign, the most distinguished within living memory, consisting of full pages in all the London daily newspapers. Specimens are still to be seen on the walls of some of the staircases in the building, and they are well worth going to see. The same firm published a series of advertisements in article form, signed by "Callisthenes," which, in a general way, reflected the policy of the house; and very clever the series was. I believe it has not ceased entirely, but there are fewer such advertisements to be seen nowadays than formerly.

Again, a manufacturer who was oversold might employ advertisements to keep his goodwill alive while he was catching up with orders.

Not many years ago a curious situation arose which provides a further example.

In a particular trade a certain article held the field. It was not too popular with the retail trade that handled it, however. The reasons do not matter. A competing manufacturer saw an opportunity to take advantage of this unpopularity. Though the existing article was a popular

favourite, it was seldom asked for by name. It held most of the market, and competitors were few and unimportant. Thus, when a person wanted some of the product in question, his habit was to say, "I want some" If he was given the article, well and good. If the shopkeeper showed a different make, however, most people would say, "No, I want So-and-so's."

The second manufacturer advertised on a large scale. Ostensibly the advertisements were straightforward attempts to push his product into popular favour. But the real purpose of the advertisements was to enable the shopkeeper to offer this manufacturer's product when a product of that *kind* was asked for. The retail trade could be depended upon to push the second article in preference to the first, and the advertisements caused people to accept it readily. They ceased to say, "No, I want So-and-so's."

In technical terms this advertising did not have to promote "consumer demand"; it only had to promote "consumer acceptance."

Now, two exceptions having been dealt with, we can return to the complicated task which the *average* advertisement must perform.

In simple terms this task may be re-stated as follows: an advertisement must be so attractive that people will read it before passing on to news or fiction or other editorial matter; it must

impress the name of the article advertised upon the reader's memory so vividly that he will carry it in his head at least for some days; it must make the reader want this article, and this article alone before all others, to such an extent that he will find money to buy it and insist on having it even though he is advised otherwise. Briefly, an advertisement must attract, interest, convince, and produce action.

Attraction has been dealt with at length in the chapter on headlines. Attraction does not entirely cease with the headline, but it merges so quickly into interest that it needs little further discussion. One or two further examples may be quoted, however.

A cleverly phrased headline may do much to quicken interest in the illustration used.

For instance, it would have been difficult to illustrate, even diagrammatically, the selling point of a washing-machine that gently tumbled the clothes about in a whirl of soapy water, *washing* out the dirt instead of *rubbing* it out. A picture of the machine would not have escaped dullness if accompanied by some such headline as:

"A CHEAP AND DEPENDABLE WASHING-MACHINE."

or:

"DIRT WASHED OUT, NOT RUBBED OUT."

The headlines employed were :

"NO LAUNDRY BILLS FOR THE NEXT
TWENTY YEARS."

and again :

"WHY PAY A LAUNDRY TO WEAR OUT
YOUR LINEN?"

and these headlines quickened interest even in the machine itself. They made people look to see what kind of machine this was. Was it large and complicated, or likely to be costly?

Similarly, a picture of a London motor-omnibus is not very exciting. But it possesses attraction over the headline :

"HOW THE 'LONDON GENERAL' BUSES
GOT THEIR COLOUR."

These examples are enough to point the suggestion being made.

Of course the four qualities which an advertisement must have merge imperceptibly into one another. An attempt to divide them is being made for the sake of clarity.

Your first paragraph must attract *and* interest at the same time.

Interest may be introduced in many ways—too many ways, I think, for an exhaustive list to be compiled in a book which seeks to prompt

you to think things out for yourself. Four main ways may be suggested.

The first is interest through subject.

Where the article or the situation you are dealing with is itself interesting or novel, straightforward description of the facts may often be the best method of promoting interest. You must be quite sure that the subject itself actually is interesting to people generally, however. It may be charged with excitement for you or for the manufacturer concerned, and still be dismally dull to the public. Any newspaper will supply an example. There is no excuse whatever for dullness in an advertisement. Nothing is dull. There is always some aspect of it which is interesting. An advertisement which is dull is merely incompetent either through the laziness or lack of experience of the writer of it, or, frequently enough, through the poor imagination of the manufacturer. The discovery of that aspect of a thing which is interesting is your task as a copywriter.

An example of interest promoted by subject is provided by Proxcelin, the cellulose finish for motor-cars.

Here was a new discovery, so rich in interest that it needed little more than plain description. This finish, unlike ordinary coach-work, was so hard that a cat couldn't scratch it. Dirt and grime

could be rubbed off it dry, and this only improved the polish! No need here for much beyond recitation of the selling points.

When you think that the subject itself is novel enough to produce interest, you must still be careful of the way you present even the bare facts, or a wrong impression may be conveyed.

For instance, supposing, for the sake of illustration, that you had an electric globe made of a unique kind of glass tough enough for an insurance company to insure it against breakage. This ought to be interesting enough for anybody.

Ought the copy argument, then, to be :

“THIS IS THE ONLY GLOBE INSURED
AGAINST BREAKAGE.”

No. Such an argument would merely confuse the real issue. It would produce a whole tangle of thoughts, where a different treatment would be clarity itself. It would actually obscure the real selling point. This argument would cause many people to stop in doubt, saying to themselves, “Can this be true? Is there no other globe insured?”

The right argument would be :

“THIS GLOBE IS INSURED AGAINST
BREAKAGE.”

In this plain statement there is no room for doubt. All the emphasis is on *this* globe, *this* globe unlike other globes. The mere statement itself is arresting enough. It sets this globe apart. No opportunity for opposition to the novelty of the statement is afforded. It is plain sailing from the start.

Generally speaking, “attraction by subject” can only occur with a new invention of some kind ; either a new invention entirely or an *important* improvement to an existing article. Beware of assuming public interest in a minor modification.

As I have said, there is a host of ways to provoke interest, and too many of them for all the various opportunities in front of you to be pointed out. Some appeal to the reason, some to the emotions. And do not forget this, it is important : more people act from an emotion of some kind than from pure reason. A great many people act because their emotions have been stirred, and *believe* their action to have been based on pure reason. More people still, having been emotionally stirred, produce reasons for themselves to justify the action they desire to take. Hence an appeal to the emotions is extremely powerful. And perhaps the most powerful appeal of all is one which combines emotion *and* reason. I doubt whether an advertisement has ever been written which is based on appeal to reason alone. Even

an extremely informative advertisement usually has a touch of emotion here and there.

Do you think it will be difficult to introduce emotion into the everyday, humdrum things a copywriter has to describe? Let me give you what you will agree is a fairly extreme example—chosen for that very reason. There is certainly emotion in the following piece of copy about solid motor tyres. And even a little excitement too.

"In the sombre light of the dawn of 21st February 1916, the German Command opened its attack; the magnificent episode of Verdun had begun.

"Every railway-line leading to Verdun was under German fire; in a few days these lines ceased to exist. There remained but one line of communication: the 7½ miles of fourth-class road, 23 feet wide, from Bar-le-Duc to Verdun.

"By evening, on the 21st, Captain Doumenc had organised the first Road Regulating Commission of Verdun. The first act of the Commission on the morning of the 22nd was to abolish all horse-drawn traffic on the road. Two continuous lines of motor-lorries, one going to the Front, the other coming away from it, occupied the full width of the narrow way. To allow a single horse-drawn vehicle on the road would have reduced the speed of the motor

traffic to that of a horse. Over that single road, then, six thousand lorries passed every twenty-four hours; one every fourteen seconds; on certain days, one every five seconds.

"So vitally important was it that the stream of traffic should not be delayed for even one hour that special travelling groups of mechanics passed continually up and down the road. If a lorry broke down, it was immediately taken in tow by the lorry ahead of it. If the accident was such that the lorry could not be towed, it was thrown over the embankment. A lorry more or less meant nothing: the traffic must move without break, day and night.

"In March the thaw set in; disaster seemed imminent. The hard-frozen road had sustained the abnormal traffic successfully; once the thaw set in, it was only a matter of hours before the road broke up entirely. Verdun was in danger of being cut off from the rear. From the stone quarries near at hand, thousands of men were set to work to throw stones directly on to the road. Impossible to set steam-rollers to work; that would have delayed the stream that must never cease. The lorries themselves had to do the work of rollers.

"Would there be a breakdown?

"The test thrown upon the tyres was almost beyond imagination.

"Could *any* tyre survive?"

"The tyres themselves supplied the answer.

"Day and night, without pause, the column rolled, thundered, over the 'sacred way.'

"The traffic never stopped.

"B.G. Tyres had saved Verdun."

Similarly with the opening paragraph of an advertisement offering a set of the collected novels of John Galsworthy:

"With many books—with most novels—you read them, enjoy them for the moment, and they are done with. A library subscription is a good enough way to procure such books. *But you cannot read Galsworthy thus.* Galsworthy stirs your emotions too deeply. What he writes has not only a magical interest—he writes with such humanity, such tolerance, with such insight, sometimes with such splendid indignation, and always with such challenging interrogation of the truth, that his books are profoundly moving. They are not books that can be put aside and forgotten; they are books which influence your own mind and thoughts and outlook. You cannot part with them. *You must own them.* If there is need to return them to a library, it is like parting with a child to abandon them, and your imperative desire is to *buy* them once

and for all for your own. Here is your opportunity!

Similarly again, in the following, an advertisement for a player piano:

"SONGS

"The beautiful old ones . . . the infectious new ones . . . sing them to the music of your Gulbranson.

"The songs you sang when you were young—sing them again . . . the simple melodies so rich in memories.

"The catchy tunes your children hum—bring their music into your home. Make that home a place where the young people love to gather. Learn the greatest joy of music, the joy of singing *to music you play yourselves.*"

A classic example of appeal to the emotions is provided by that wonderful Kodak advertisement which has appeared at Christmas-time. For powerful suggestion in the very minimum of words it can hardly be excelled.

"At Christmas-time your friends can buy anything that you can give them—except your photograph."

There is remarkable economy of words here.

An appeal to curiosity is always strong—and the illustration can help you a great deal here.

The words "How" and "Why" are useful in provoking curiosity. As for instance:

"How a Food Factory keeps Spick and Span."

"A factory where any kind of food is prepared ought to be as clean as a creamery, as white as wind-blown linen, as speckless as a Dutch kitchen, burnished like a battleship's brass.

"So, anyhow, thought the Horlick's Malted Milk Co. And here was a problem. Was there a paint which could be scalded and soused and scrubbed and scoured and yet smile a glistening and lustrous white through month after month of such sluicing and sprucing as paint never knew, save only that of the King's Navee?

"There was: Berger Paint. Paint of flint-like hardness of finish, paint of crystal-like lustre, or velvet-like depth if a matt tone is preferred. What a paint for your house—for every room in your house!"

The illustration used for the example above showed the interior of a factory (fancifully drawn) with scores of humorous little men swarming all over it with buckets and pails and mops, all busy washing and scrubbing.

The following advertisement for the British Portland Cement Association has a headline with a certain degree of curiosity in it: the reader is

likely to be curious to know what the offer of practical assistance is.

The copy has interest for another reason. It would have been very easy indeed, in an advertisement emphasising the usefulness of concrete, to have made large general claims as to strength, durability, cheapness, and so forth. This copy gains from the inclusion of specific uses to which concrete may be put. Notice, also, the urgency of the concluding paragraphs.

"OFFER OF FREE PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE

"Instead of timber for fence supports, gate-posts, and walls—concrete.

"Instead of galvanised iron for tanks and cisterns—concrete.

"Instead of timber or galvanised iron or brick for poultry houses, piggeries, and farm buildings—concrete. Instead of wood or brick or iron—concrete for troughs, wells, green-houses, hot-beds, root cellars, feeding floors, foot-paths, kerbs, and gutters.

"Concrete—because it is cheap, strong, and everlasting. Concrete—because it is easily cleaned and unaffected by weather. Concrete—because it needs no painting (like wood), no pointing (like brick). Concrete—because it reduces maintenance charges to practically *nothing*.

"On all these matters, and on all the other manifold uses of concrete, the British Portland Cement Association offers you

free practical assistance. It retains experts familiar with every use to which concrete may be put, and their advice and help are offered you in the hope, and with the intention, that you will take the fullest advantage of the offer. The Association wants to help you if it can."

There is pretty strong provocation of curiosity in the headlines (for a course in business training):

"HOW MUCH OF YOUR FUTURE ARE YOU
LEAVING TO CHANCE?"

"WHAT WILL BE YOUR INCOME FIVE
YEARS HENCE?"

Just as advertisement illustrations are provoking when given a dramatic twist, so is copy.

For instance, an advertisement was illustrated by a remarkable photograph taken through the wind-shield and side windows of a closed car. It showed a bus. Through the wind-shield the bus was plain enough. But the corner view through the side window showed the bus curiously waved and distorted. The headlines said:

"CAN GLASS ADD TO THE RISKS OF
DRIVING?"

"Look clearly at this untouched photograph and see your answer at the right.

"Skill in avoiding collisions depends largely upon accuracy of vision. Your eyes may be perfectly normal, exceptionally good, in fact; and yet they can be tricked and deceived by common sheet-glass—as shown in the photograph above. Look to the right; what do you see? A bus—strange, elongated, distorted. No bus was ever really like that. But you are looking at it through sheet-glass. The distortions are caused by the waves and irregularities in the glass.

"When you look through the wind-shield straight ahead, you see another bus, as it actually is. You see accurately and normally because the wind-shield is Plate-Glass. Plate-Glass is manufactured by a method that frees it from unsightly flaws and defects. It is rolled, ground, and polished until it is perfectly clear. And it is made extra tough by a process of annealing peculiar to itself. Therefore, it is more resistant to breakage than ordinary glass.

"Insist upon having Plate-Glass on the car you buy. It is the only glass that is in keeping with *quality* in the car. Insist on it also for glazing when you are replacing broken panes."

Again, a manufacturer of eyeglasses used a most dramatic idea. The illustration showed two figures, one a boy in running vest and shorts, crouching for the pistol, with knees bent and

hands touching the track, all intent on the start. Beside him, similarly posed, was a figure in a diver's dress—great boots, rubber gloves, massive domed helmet. The copy said:

“YOUR BOY MAY BE WORSE HANDICAPPED!

“You wouldn't put your boy in a diving-suit and expect him to win a race! Certainly not.

“Yet you may be starting him in the race of life under a handicap just as heavy. How are his eyes?

“‘Oh, *my* child sees perfectly,’ you say! Wait a minute, now. Seeing well is not necessarily an indication that his eyes are right. Eyes and *sight* are two different things. For example, it is possible for children, like grown-ups, to see clearly with defective eyes. But they do so only by drawing excessively on their nervous energy.

“This overtaking of the nerves, to make defective eyes see clearly, may affect your boy in ways you never connect with eyes. Is he fretful? Nervous? Listless? Does he have headaches, indigestion? Any of these symptoms may be due to his eyes.

“So you see it is unsafe to assume that your child's eyes are normal. Whether he sees well or not, you should have his eyes examined. It's the only way to make sure he's not entered in the race of life under a very serious handicap.

“Now, while your child's young, is the time to act. If you give him now the help he needs, he may not have to wear glasses later. Arrange—to-day—to have his eyes examined.

* * *

“Write us to-day for an interesting and valuable new booklet, ‘*A New Age of Vision.*’”

It should be clearly understood that this idea of treating the illustration and description of an article dramatically does not limit the illustrations to persons, nor the copy angle either. What I have called the dramatic treatment has been cleverly, and perhaps more clearly, described as advertisements based on “an interrupting” idea. The usefulness, convenience, safety of an article can be presented dramatically. Sometimes drawings of living people are the best method of presentation. At others some unusual perspective in the drawing of the article can be dramatic. Or inanimate things can be brought to life. Emotions, sentiment, fear, love, pity, happiness, pride of possession (be very careful of this), sense of beauty, health, prejudice—all these are possible copy appeals, and all are capable of dramatic treatment. Examples of these appeals are not quoted because the principles followed would be the same throughout.

When it is said that copy must attract, interest, convince, and produce action, it should be understood that this analysis can be successfully applied to any sound piece of copy. But these four qualities overlap one another in practice. You cannot, for instance, set out with the idea that you will write a piece of copy four sentences in length, each sentence devoted to one quality.

Copy is not machine-made. The divisions were suggested for clarity in discussion. Copy has been likened to play-writing inasmuch as the dialogue in a play constantly develops plot or character. Similarly, just as the lines of the play tell the audience about what is happening, and reveal the characters of the people speaking, so advertisement copy, every line of it, should, from the very first word, lead the reader towards action. You attract first, to gain attention. You interest, so as to hold attention while giving information. You seek to convince by the information thus interestingly conveyed. And you make your case so complete, so compelling, so utterly persuasive that the action you desire *must* be the logical and reasonable thing for the reader to do. It is of little use merely to tell the reader to act. "Do it now" is an out-of-date phrase. You must make the reader *want* to act in the way you desire. You must rouse him. You must make him enthusiastic. You must make him feel such a sense

of loss that he is anxious to go right out now to buy the thing you have so alluringly described to him. You must make him feel that "he won't be happy till he gets it."

In building up your case, go point by point. Let each point lead the reader a little further. Marshal the argument. It does not matter whether the copy is appealing to reason or to the emotions, the argument still needs to be logically developed. There must be strict economy of ideas and, most particularly, economy of words. Stray ideas and irrelevant sentences lead the reader off the main argument, and they take up space. Remember that space may cost several pounds per inch. So every line of your copy represents shillings. Every word costs pennies. Copy must be pruned and re-cast and revised over and over again until you hit on the form of words which conveys your meaning most effectively and most economically. However, though strict economy is a formidable necessity, effectiveness must not be sacrificed to economy. For instance, the sentence:

"Inside the solid nickel case of the
..... watch you will find the five
years' guarantee,"

is marvellously economical of words. But it may be that the division of this sentence into two sentences would have increased its effectiveness.

In other words, your copy must not be so economically written that it becomes difficult for the reader to grasp the meaning. Very little present-day copy suffers from this defect, however. Your main difficulty at the start will be to cast your sentences so that they do convey information in the fewest words. And this is not a question of deleting words merely. Sentences will have to be re-cast so that two or three words may be saved. Consider the wonderful economy and, at the same time, the powerful suggestion conveyed by the cards in the non-smoking railway carriages put up by the Abdulla cigarette people :

“ NO SMOKING—
—NOT EVEN ABDULLAS ”

This is a classic of economy combined with effectiveness.

When you are cutting down copy, be quite sure that you are leaving nothing essential out. Be complete. Never forget that the public is vastly ignorant of your product, and wholly uninterested in it. Ignorant and uninterested to a degree that very few manufacturers ever understand. They know so much about the article they make, and they are so interested in it and in all its processes of manufacture, that they are very apt to assume that the public they sell to is nearly equally well informed and nearly equally inter-

ested. You will be giving valuable advice to your client if you can persuade him otherwise. There is a danger when you cut copy down that you may assume too great a knowledge on the part of the public. You may have information in your own mind so completely arranged that, in cutting down the copy, you forget that much which is known and clear enough to you is unknown to the public. Hence an incomplete case is made out.

We have all met the copywriter who complains that his copy is always being altered by some all-powerful incompetent (who could never have written anything half so brilliant himself), so that all the cleverness is taken out of it.

In fact, we have all made this complaint in our time. Nine times out of ten this protest is merely inexperience. And it *is* hard on the inexperienced to labour over a piece of work only to see it mercilessly butchered—yet not to know enough to realise that it is all the better for it. It is particularly hard, because good copy is not written without enthusiasm, and the butchering is apt to kill the enthusiasm, even though it improves the copy. It is only on reflection that the copywriter perceives that his work actually has been strengthened—when the hurt of it has healed. Then, if the man is sensible, the enthusiasm returns. A very frequent complaint, in these circumstances, is that the copy chief, or the client,

has missed the very point that the copywriter was trying to make; that in his dullness he has taken out all the charm, or the idea, that the copy was built upon. When you think this, you should bear in mind that the man who read it did so with much more interest and care than the newspaper reader will. And if you did not get your idea home to your copy chief, it is probably because you did not express what was in your mind clearly enough. What was in your head may have been fine; but you had too much in your head to get the thing right on paper. Your own familiarity with the idea led you to assume too much from the reader.

When you have become a copy chief and need to do some butchering yourself, it will be wise to explain exactly *why* in your judgment something must be altered. This will let the copywriter into partnership with you. He may, as I suggested just now, have done some reasoning which has not been too clearly expressed in his writing, and then, if you will discuss it with him, it may be possible to get into better shape the thing that was in his mind. It may even be possible to improve upon your own conception of how the copy should be written. Since copy is essentially reasoning, copywriters are usually reasonable, and discussing the way a man has chosen to do a piece of work keeps alive his enthusiasm—a very precious thing.

Even if you can't adopt this method, it will be easy to let him down lightly. You will ask him to do it your way; and then you will talk to him about the product, emphasising the points that you think are important (which he missed or saw from a wrong angle), so that you will stir up his enthusiasm and send him away full of the right ideas about the thing. Instruction of this kind is enormously helpful to the copywriter. Having a *flair* for talking to copywriters like this, so that they know from the outset just how to handle a job, and so that real enthusiasm is kindled for it, is what makes a copy chief a great man. And if he doesn't possess it, he never will be a great copy chief. This is much more difficult than writing the copy yourself—apart from the fact that you will not have the time to do this.

The one thing, in my opinion, that it is unwise to tell the copywriter is that his way is "too clever." It is unwise because, to begin with, it isn't true; the fact being that if the copy, the way he did it, is not usable, it is not because it is too clever, but because it is not clever enough. If you let the copywriter think he is continually doing work which is too clever to use, you cannot blame him if he considers you a dull-witted fool. There is such a thing as copy which is too original, too sparkling, too concerned with its own brilliant phrasing. But this is not copy

that is too clever : it is copy that is not clever enough because its cleverness has not been concealed. Or it is not clever enough because the writer has not realised that something plain and straightforward would have been the better way.

Heaven forbid that I should suggest that advertisement copy of to-day is ever too good. Much of it is worthless generalities, much is dull, ungrammatical exaggeration, and more is merely uninteresting. But there is some which is written so as to be obviously over the head of the public it is appealing to, and which gives quite a wrong impression about the merchandise it is advertising. But, because it is undeniably clever as writing, many advertising men admire it, forgetting entirely the kind of journalism which the public devours.

Apart from this consideration, the public distrusts transparent cleverness on the not-too-frequent occasions when it perceives it. The reader must not be mystified, or he may feel that he is being played with by some one cleverer than himself, and he will become distrustful.¹

¹ Cf. C. E. M. Joad's *Thasymachus : or The Future of Morals* (To-day and To-morrow Series): "Social morality in a democracy springs from the envy of the average man for the talents of the able man, which cause him to feel inferior, and from the dislike of the horde for the conduct of the eccentric which makes it feel unsafe."

To let this risk occur is to admit one of two things : either you were not experienced enough to see that it might happen, or else you became so much in love with your own pretty phrases that your fondness for them deadened your critical capacity—which in the end amounts to the same thing.

Most copy has a plain story to tell, and mostly it is best told in a plain way. As attractively and interestingly as you know how ; but without any frills.

What you have to remember is that, for the most part, your public is the great middle class. Look around you the next time you are in the upper circle at a theatre, and you will see an extraordinarily good sample of it ; the upper circle is a favourite refuge. It arrives in strength, with tulle enveloping its head and shoulders, and leaves early so as not to miss the last train.

What kind of reading does the great middle class (you cannot consider the exceptions, of course) prefer ? Does it read the subtle work of C. E. Montague or the polished epigrams of Philip Guedalla ? Not a bit of it. It buys "best sellers" in enormous quantities. *You* must not write such slipshod stuff. Never let it be said that I encouraged anybody to write advertisements as popular fiction is written. But what you write must not be so very far removed from it.

It will, of course, be better writing, because written with far greater economy of words, with greater directness, with much greater pains, and with far more originality of idea. But clever copy does not tax the intelligence of the reader or titillate his intellect. It says a plain thing attractively, interestingly, alluringly, but never so that there can be the slightest doubt about what is meant. The delight of reading *Fiery Particles* or *The Second Empire* (I only mention these because they are rather good examples; you know the kind of writing I mean) is that one's mind has to be constantly on the alert so as not to miss the subtlety of a single sentence, and so as to appreciate every turn of phrase and every apt word, every allusion and every piece of elusiveness. I do not think it is too much to say that copy should tax no one's intelligence. The audience is too vast. You don't select your audience from the few; you appeal to the many, like the best seller. If you become too subtle, there is always the chance that some people will not understand you, and the cost of circulation is too great to permit this. What you say must be perfectly and unmistakably clear. This is one reason, perhaps the chief reason, why copy is so very difficult to write, and why only men who specialise in it can write it successfully at all.

Above everything, copy must be interesting.

But it must be interesting through vividness. You cannot play games with the reader's mind. The sly fun of Guedalla has little place in copy. And so, since mere charm of style is denied to you, to be interesting and sparkling is exceedingly difficult. You have to achieve charm of style, but that charm must be instantly understandable. I think this is probably the main reason why specific facts are the one and only recipe for active copy. You know how, when you are reading a rather dull book, an actual example, or the relation of an actual experience, quickens your interest at once, and you read quite eagerly for a page or two, until the book slips back into generalities again. If you have facts to tell, it is not very hard to tell them interestingly. It is when there are few facts that the thing is difficult. That is why "atmosphere" copy is so hard to write. Fortunately, "atmosphere" copy is usually making its appeal to a higher class of public, so that you can, then, provoke interest by polished writing.

I don't mean by all this that copy for the masses mustn't be sparkling or polished. Of course it must. Think of the terrific competition for interest that you have to fight. But you must not let your pen run away with you. You must, as Quiller-Couch says, "murder your darlings." You must never forget the public you are appeal-

ing to. Keep some very ordinary person in your mind's eye all the time, write to an individual and forget the vague word "public" altogether. It is said that the successful barrister always keeps in mind the really essential fact about which he wants to convince the jury; never loses sight of that one fact, whatever he may be talking about. And that he looks at the jury, decides which is the least intelligent member of it, and proceeds to explain and build up his case upon the fact, so that that one jurymen cannot fail to grasp it. He knows that if he can drive it into that man's head the eleven others will get it too. And he hammers and hammers away at it until he feels that it has really got home. Could there be a better way of describing how all copy should be written? Keep on at your main point (the policy which governs the copy), never lose sight of it, never let the reader have a chance to wander from it. A cynic has said that a barrister repeats his principal points three times. Once, because the jury will not completely hear what he said; again, because some of the jury will hear the words without fully grasping their meaning; and again, because only at the third time will all the jury both hear the words and completely understand them. You had better not apply this too literally to copy, but there is a good deal in it, all the same. The ideal way is to say what

you have to say so perfectly clearly that its full significance will be understood first time. But repetition is a valuable tool.

Don't misread some of the things I have tried to say here, as meaning that all copy must be so economical of words as to lose picturesqueness, or vividness, or aptness of word and simile. Not at all. Suggestion is often stronger than an attempt at direct description. Of course, you cannot do without it in copy. A great deal of copy is weak, however, because the suggestion it is meant to convey is weakly expressed. You *must* remember that you know what it is you are trying to convey, but the reader does not; there is a lot at the back of *your* mind, but nothing at the back of his. Also, you must remember that what appeals to you as being powerfully suggestive may appear to another mind as merely uninteresting. You must never forget the reader. You must be explicit, even in suggestion. And you can only be powerfully suggestive by the most careful choice of words—by kindling, spirited, pungent words and phrasing. Only thus may your copy be lifted above the average. People don't want to read advertisements, and if they are "next matter," something they *do* want to read is very ready to their eyes. You must coax or provoke them away. You must be so interesting that people will read your message

because it is interesting. And this needs great skill when your space is limited, as it nearly always is. The curious thing is that a great many copy-writers who can write active, provoking copy for small spaces (anything up to a half-triple column, say) seem to lose a lot of their skill for saying things economically when they come to write a full-page advertisement. I have noticed this over and over again. The size of the space and its importance (and very likely the large cost of it, too) make them as self-conscious as though they were writing their first advertisement. "I am doing something really important," they seem to say to themselves, and they become as stilted and as wordy as the merest novice. Limitation of space is no longer imposed upon them, and they frequently start off with high-sounding generalisations instead of plunging right into the heart of the thing. If their capacity for self-criticism is developed, as one may expect it to be, it comes out all right in the end, because they see what they have done, and cut out two or three paragraphs from the beginning. But you have only to look at a few full-page advertisements to find some that suffer from this defect. You should remember that mere size of space, great as its attention-value is, does not make people want to read what you have written. You must still be vividly interesting from the very first words. Your

only chance is to be so provoking at the beginning that you get the reader into the heart of your message right away, so that you have your chance of holding him for the full story that you have to tell. An old newspaper man has said that every newspaper has three classes of reader: the man who only skims through the headlines; the man who reads the first two or three paragraphs of the news; and the man who reads his paper thoroughly. And if you look at any popular newspaper you will see that the news is presented in just this way.

If people read newspapers in this way, how do you suppose they read advertisements?

With hardly an exception, almost any one you care to ask will say that he never reads them at all. If there are any exceptions (and, of course, there are thousands), you had better forget them when you are writing copy. Assume that nobody wants to read what you have to say, and be determined that your headlines and copy shall be so interesting that it will be humanly impossible to pass them by. You can only achieve this by *telling* your public something, and telling it quickly, provocatively, and with a ring of transparent sincerity and conviction; then you will be believed.

You must not, of course, rely upon mere description of the article. Only rarely is copy as

simple as that. You must describe what the article will do for the reader. Your copy must be full of pleasing images. And these images must be positive, as a general rule. It may be perfectly true to say that "this beer contains no arsenic," but this illuminating fact will hardly assist sales. "Don't knock your competitor" is an axiom of copywriting, but not everybody understands the full significance of it. Crying down a competitor's wares is a poor copy method for several reasons. It suggests, for one thing, that there cannot be much to recommend your own goods: if there were, you would explain their own advantages instead of the disadvantages of the other man's. Secondly, if you start telling people how undesirable a competing article is, they are rather apt to agree with you and say to themselves, "Oh, well, I won't buy any kind!" (of the article in question).

Negative copy has a chilling effect. There is a third reason, and it is a powerful one. If you try to push your article by decrying a competitor, you are using the powerful influence of advertising to *un*-sell an article stocked by the very retailer whose goodwill you wish for. Competition is one thing. Trying directly to stop the sales of a competing line is another. And remember this: travelling salesmen still keep a close personal touch with retail shopkeepers. Naturally they

cultivate friendly relations. If you knock a competing line, shopkeepers are apt to say to the salesman who travels in *your* article, when next he calls, "I say, Brown, look at what your advertisements are saying about the goods Smith sells! He's a friend of mine. I don't like this kind of talk. And how am I to sell my stock of Smith's goods if you talk like this about them?"

No. You are not likely to convince the reader about the merit of *your* article by telling the reader about the demerits of another.

This is not convincing copy. Let us look at an example of this. Which makes you want tomato ketchup? This:

"Blank's Tomato Ketchup is not like most ketchups. It isn't made from tomato pulp. It isn't full of tasteless water. It isn't made of tomatoes that were so overripe and soft that they were good for nothing but bottling. Blank's is made from firm, fresh fruit."

Or:

"HEINZ
TOMATO
KETCHUP.

"It is the literal fact that the tomatoes in Heinz Tomato Ketchup are hardly

cooled from the warmth of the sun when they are put into the kettles to cook. They are actually cooking less than twelve hours after the sunshine has finished ripening them on the vines. When you taste the Ketchup you'll understand the difference really fresh fruit makes."

There is not much doubt about it, is there?

This is not to say that there is no value in contrast, as, for instance:

"When gusts of wind are blowing umbrellas inside out, and men are running for their hats; or when pavements are soaked by gushes of rain and people's faces are icy white with cold, those travelling on the closed tops of L.C.C. Trams are grateful for the shelter that lets them read quietly or smoke a pipe in comfort."

Now all through your copy I said you must be working through interest and conviction towards action. How is this to be done? It must be done by getting a note of urgency into your copy.

By urgency I do not mean clamour. I do not mean that you have to beat the big drum. That kind of advertising is old fashioned. Urgency does not mean loss of dignity, nor even lack of

restraint. By urgency I mean words and sentences which successively urge the reader forward, which call for attention and action, which are earnest and persistent in suggestion. Sometimes a series of three or four questions is a good method of instilling this note into copy.

And let me call your attention to the extreme importance of the ending of your copy. The importance of the ending of an advertisement is often overlooked. Copy is written so as to carry the reader to the climax, and then it descends to some such tame and weakly phrase as "obtainable at your dealer's."

When I say that the end of your advertisement is supremely important I *mean* the actual ending. Not the last sentences, but those last four or five words where you tell the reader how and where to go for the article advertised. To find for these last few words a different form than usual is exceedingly difficult. But if you *can* hit on some new phrase, the advertisement will be strengthened. For instance, instead of saying, "Obtainable at all chemists," you might say: "The next chemist's shop you see has a Blank razor in stock ready for you." Or you might say: "On your way home to-night stop at the first chemist's shop you see. He has So-and-so in stock, price 1s. and 1s. 9d."

There is no need, either, for the ending of the

copy to be over-insistent. It may be gracefully concluded. For example :

"Start then to-morrow. Grape-Nuts for breakfast every morning. It's only a trifle—but trifles added together are the sum of life. As a trial you may like to accept the following offer " :

A little more urgent than the example above is the following :

"To-day, ask your grocer. Grape-Nuts needs no cooking. Just shake it on to your plate. There is enough in the 10½d. packet to make a delicious breakfast dish every morning for sixteen days. Don't wait until next shopping day. Call in at the grocer's *to-day* and ask for a packet of Grape-Nuts. Then you can try this tempting food for breakfast to-morrow."

By such phrases as these the note of urgency is continued to the very end of your advertisement. There is no anticlimax. There is no weak descent, no breaking off of your message ; you carry conviction to the last. And you can never rouse action without conviction. Action must, as I have said, spring from conviction. And there can be little that is convincing about your copy if it lacks sincerity.

The Concise Edition of the Oxford Dictionary defines sincerity as follows : "Free from pretence or deceit, the same in reality as in seeming or profession, not assumed or put on, genuine, honest, frank."

Now, on the face of it, it would appear not very difficult, given belief in the commodity, to write "genuine, honest, frank" copy about it. How can the inexperienced copy man learn how to convey frankness and genuineness in his descriptions ? Plainly, enthusiasm on the part of the writer is not enough. It is a question of conveying enthusiasm, and something else, to the mind of the reader. I don't mean to suggest that there is any trick about it. Trickiness has no place in copy. The fact remains that an experienced copywriter can inject a genuine ring into his work even when, as sometimes must happen even to the most conscientious worker, he cannot feel enthusiastic about his subject. You cannot feel enthusiastic with a cold in the head, for instance. Even then he has learned how to get this quality into his writing, and he does it almost of habit.

The inexperienced man often cannot do it, try as he will. What is it, then, that does do it ?

I should say that the first thing the copywriter has to do is to lose self-consciousness. The moment he succeeds in this he abandons clichés : his work ceases to be stilted.

And though it may sound childish, I know of few better wrinkles than the method used by one copy chief when instructing his younger men. He takes his man aside and, after instructing him in the copy policy to be followed, gives him a photograph to write to. "Here," he says, "is the wife of George Richards. Richards is a little badly paid book-keeper in the City. He lives in a jerry-built villa in a garden suburb with 'new art doors.' He pays for his furniture by the month, and allows his wife fifty shillings a week to do the housekeeping, buy clothes for the children, and grumble at the gas bills. Poor little woman, she has a stiff time of it. She works from seven in the morning till the dinner-plates are washed up at half-past nine, but still she manages a smile for her husband when he gets home tired in the evening wanting to be loved. Now, my boy, you have got to write a message to that pathetic little soul that will make her *want* this brand of custard-powder. That will not just tell her it is for sale, but will make her *want* it, and remember its name, and be willing to pay the price asked for it, and insist that she gets this kind and no other when she shops on Friday night."

You can say this is childish if you like. But you must be a very thick-skinned copy man if you show up empty catch-phrases in response to such

an exhortation. It gets into your mind the thing that the copy has to be. It drives home to you the necessity not merely for writing in simple words which will be understood, but of writing a direct *message*.

What it really does, of course, is to do some of your thinking for you. With such a start you understand the necessity for picturing mentally the persons to whom you are writing; it gets rid of the vague "public" by substituting a typical individual.

Perhaps it does even more than that: it makes you understand your responsibility. If you have thus brought home to you the relationship between your work and the people to whom it is addressed, you will not willingly (nor convincingly) write about a thing in which you do not believe yourself.

This method has another value: put such a photograph before you, write a letter to the subject of it, and you will realise that you are attempting an extraordinarily difficult task. Your work will be the better for the realisation.

Apply this test to a motor-car. Imagine yourself encouraged by your chief somewhat as follows. "Here is Richard Clayton. He is a departmental manager of a big firm in the City. His income is in the neighbourhood of fifteen hundred a year. He lives in the country, comes to town every

day, has a wife and family, and is fairly comfortably off; lives well, dresses well, likes to get the best he can afford, and is considering the purchase of a car. Now, write a message to this man which will make him prefer *this* car to any other; which will cause him to find a dealer who handles this car and ask for a demonstration."

Can you imagine copy of this kind being produced after such instructions?

"Those stalwart qualities of character which distinguish the leader are not attained easily, nor by chance. Only through faithful adherence to lofty principles can they be acquired.

"The Car is universally recognised to-day as worthy of its honoured name, because each step in designing it and building it has been taken in strict conformity to the tenets of correct engineering, masterly workmanship, and good taste."

An objection might be raised that no single car advertisement can be expected to sell a car, or even a demonstration; it is the cumulative effect of car advertising which succeeds in establishing a feeling of confidence in prospective customers' minds, assisted by other circumstances of course.

Accepting this objection, for the sake of dis-

cussion, it still remains true that there is more than one way of establishing a feeling of confidence; and *actively* written copy is one of them.

A frequent hindrance which you will encounter when trying to write actively about a high-class product is the opposition of the client to what he calls lack of dignity. This bogey of dignity is ridiculous. So often any piece of writing which is really clear and forcible is described as "not dignified enough." And you get such copy as this:

"The interests that made the House of — famous are those carrying it on to-day handed down to successive generations with the same high commercial ideals."

On rare occasions only, the client is right, and inexperience or small ability has caused the copy to be inappropriate.

We are getting rather far, however, in this digression, from the motive of this discussion, sincerity in copy.

Copy needs to have realism: "The practice of regarding things in their true nature, and dealing with them as they are, freedom from prejudice and convention, practical views and policy, fidelity of representation, truth to nature,

insistence upon details" (*Oxford Dictionary*, Concise Edition).

In describing an article, try to present your arguments in a vivid, *pictorial* way. If you will turn back to the examples of Berger Paint copy on pages 141 and 166, you will see that they contain pictures in the copy. "Here must be colour. Here must be brilliance, contrasts, harmonies, such as will delight the eye and fulfil the expectations of all who move in these luxurious rooms." These words create a picture in the reader's mind of the glitter and splendour and freshness of the paint-work to be seen in great hotels. Similarly: "A factory where any kind of food is prepared ought to be as clean as a creamery, as white as wind-blown linen, as speckless as a Dutch kitchen, burnished like a battleship's brass." Here is a series of pictures. And the copy goes on: "Was there a paint which could be scalded and soused and scrubbed and scoured and yet smile a glistening and lustrous white through month after month of such sluicing and sprucing as paint never knew, save only that of the King's Navee?" Here again the bald fact that Berger Paints will stand washing is given activeness by the pictorial realism with which the fact is presented.

Let us look at another example. Facts, as I have said, are the recipe for punch in copy.

Any fact, however plainly stated, is better than any generalisation or mere opinion. But don't be content merely with giving facts. For instance: to say that a portable garage is "large and roomy and spacious" is mere opinion. What one man considers large and roomy may be thought mean and cramped by another. To say that the garage measures 17 feet long by 8 feet wide is better, because it is specific. But even this does not give the reader a mental picture of the size of the garage. He is not used to such measurements. To know how large such a garage really is, he must get out a rule and measure up this specification. If, on the other hand, you say that "You can put an average 12 h.p. car into this garage, put up the hood, pull out the luggage-grid, open all-four doors and walk round it," you have described the size of the garage in such a way that the reader can *see* the size of the garage. He can picture his own car in it.

Again: "These motor houses (there are all sizes, from a house for an Austin Seven up to one big enough to hold a Rolls Royce and a small car as well....." The reader can picture these sizes. The mention of the Austin Seven depicts inexpensiveness, since the Austin Seven is a car of a popular price. The mention of the Rolls Royce depicts quality,

since people who own Rolls Royces can afford the best.

To say that a garage intended for erection by the purchaser is easy to put up is, again, a mere opinion. But say that "all parts are accurately machined and planed smooth, all screw-holes are started. The Leabank Motor House is so easy to erect that you can put it up yourself with a screw-driver, a hammer, and an adjustable spanner (from your own tool-kit)," creates a picture in the reader's mind. He imagines, for himself, the parts sliding easily into one another. He *knows* that a job which requires only these three simple tools must be easy. The mention of the screw-holes being ready-started is exceedingly reassuring. He understands instantly that this job must have been thought out very carefully by a practical workman. The reader is given confidence. He feels he is dealing with a manufacturer who understands his difficulties and has prepared everything ready for him. This is what I mean by realism and by "pictorial" copy.

Take these examples :

"The comfort of the (chair) is something real, something you can almost touch. It takes complete possession of you, soothing every muscle, quieting the tired mind. However hard

a day you've had, there is sure relief from all harassment and fatigue when you come home to the at night. You can worry in bed, but not in the"

Compare this with :

"There are some who try a Buoyant Chair for the first time in a shop or a showroom. And when they sit down they have their boots on and their overcoats, and even their bowler-hats.

"And they fall a-pummelling the chair, and if there's more than one of them buying it, they keep sitting down in turn and saying, 'Did you ever feel anything like this?' Now this kind of thing makes the Buoyant Chair somewhat reserved. It consents to give just a taste of its illustrious quality—but wait! Wait till some evening when the curtains are drawn and the hearth is swept and the fender bar's as warm as toast—slippers waiting; dog dreaming!

"Then, indeed, will you see the King of Comfort in his own kingdom."

Here are two methods of describing an arm-chair. The second carries more conviction than the first. Have you not tried a chair in exactly this way? These two scenes—the descrip-

tion of trying the chair and of the "King of Comfort in his own kingdom"—are so vivid, the realism, "practice of regarding things in their true nature and dealing with them as they are . . . the freedom from convention, fidelity of representation," present such a realistic picture to your mind that you are ready to believe all that is said about the Buoyant Chair. This is more than merely sincerity. The first example is probably not lacking in sincerity. But the second has realism in it as well.

Let us look at another example :

"There are few sights so pathetically ineffective as a small child with a heavy cold trying to blow a button of a nose that is already sore and red. In every nursery there should be a jar of Pomeroy Skin Food . . .," and so on.

Irresistibly true! Why? Because of that delightfully unconventional phrase, "a button of a nose!" You have called it that yourself, *of course* you believe the writer who has perceived the same thing himself.

Compare this with :

"You are certain to like Lavender Soap, not only because of its enduring fragrance, not only because of its soft and perfumed lather, but because of its sheer economy and

intrinsic charm. Fragrant to the very last."

No one has a right to say that this lacks sincerity. But I do say that it is not very convincing. And what it needs to convey conviction is the touch of realism that is absent.

Another example :

"Nine children! We counted them. One on a scooter, two in a go-cart, and the rest on active little feet, swarming around a pleasant house in a London suburb one bright morning not so long ago.

"Surely this is a good place to inquire about laundry soap,' we thought. 'Mothers always know more about washing than any one else.'"

You have a picture of those children. And then—"Mothers always know more about washing than any one else"—this is the note of realism that finally makes this copy believable. Because of its truth to nature the *rest* of the copy is easy to believe.

The examples quoted are drawn from very opposite schools of copywriting. Yet, different as they are, these examples have the ring of truth about them.

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You will have noticed, perhaps, that no word has been said about style in copywriting. The reason is that, in my view, an advertisement writer should be able to command style. I know very few copywriters who possess a style which does not vary. Only one of them is in the front rank. Style ought to vary. As Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has observed, it takes all kinds to make a world, or a literature.

"The business of writing demands *two*—the author and the reader . . . what follows but that in speaking and writing we have an obligation to put ourselves into the hearer's or reader's place. It is *his* comfort, *his* convenience, we have to consult. To *express* ourselves is a very small part of the business; very small and almost unimportant as compared with *impressing* ourselves; the aim of the whole process being to persuade."

The same style of writing cannot be expected to make equal appeal to the readers of *The Times* and the readers of *Home Notes*—unless it is a very simple style indeed. Even then it will not be quite right. In addressing educated people you have an opportunity which does not exist when you address people less educated. Advantage should be taken of this. This is not snobbishness; it is common sense.

No advertiser has yet touched the fringe of this subject of suiting copy to the papers in

which it appears. The practical difficulties are, of course, enormous, but they should be worth the trouble of overcoming them. A single example will make what I mean clear. Suppose you are working for the manufacturer of a camera. Your copy might be simply descriptive of the superior construction of these cameras. Or, better, in my opinion, it might be descriptive of the delights of photography. Now, in papers read by sporting country people, this copy could dwell on the interest of photographs of meets and shoots and dogs and horses. In papers read by women particularly, the copy might deal with the unending delight of a photograph album showing children through infancy, childhood, schooldays, and so on. Imagine the priceless value of such a collection to mothers and fathers. In gardening papers there would be plenty to say about photographs of particular flowers, prize blooms, and so on. The idea is capable of enormous extension, and there can be no doubt about the tremendously increased effectiveness of such a campaign.

In a similar way a different kind of words must be used to sell a mechanical product from those used to sell jewellery or face-powder. Copy needs to have character. But it must not reveal your character more than you can help. It must be characteristic of the article in question. You must

create character for your clients' advertisements. And if your work is characterised by one style of writing, it must inevitably lack originality. If you have a number of clients to work for, and of course you will have a number, your clients' advertisements will, if the same devices, however clever, are repeated, resemble one another. Whereas all your clients' advertisements should, as far as possible, have character of their own—the article's character, as you have created it.

Another subject on which nothing has been written is the length of copy. R. H. Stevens has said all that needs to be said on this subject in one sentence: "Copy should be as short as possible, but as long as necessary."¹ There is no merit in short copy as short copy. And none in mere length. Say what you have to

¹ It is necessary for "mail order" copy to be long. The principles of mail order copy do not differ from those discussed in this book. But mail order copy must be full length, always. It must be written in such a way that no question about the goods is left unanswered. The case must be complete. The only thing that may be left in doubt is the price of the article advertised, and then only if the price is high. This is done so as to increase the number of replies. The printed matter which will be sent will be voluminous; and as there will be plenty of space here at the advertiser's disposal, and as the reader will have plenty of time in which to read this material, the advertiser has his best opportunity here to overcome the reader's objection to the price.

say and then finish. Consideration of space is another matter, of course. But the man who says that people will not read long copy is talking nonsense. You will quickly be able to find plenty of examples where long copy, in conditions as nearly exactly similar as possible, has produced more direct replies than short copy. Mere length is nothing. Make your copy interesting and people will read it. They won't want to, but the interest of what you have written will compel them. Make no mistake, however, about the difficulty of compelling them.

You may have no more space available than will hold one hundred words. Those hundred words must be so chosen that they will appeal alike, and interest and convince alike, the rich and the poor, dwellers in the restless towns and in the peaceful countryside, young people and perhaps old people too. They must convince the coldly reasoning mind, and they must stir the sentimental emotional mind—those same hundred words. They must, indeed, be a message! Make sure that what you write contains a message and is not a mere announcement. There is a difference!

Consider once again the extreme variety of the people before whom your advertisement is placed. Is your message written with such force that it will appeal to people of education, in spite

of their oft-repeated assertion that they are never influenced by advertising? Is it written with such simplicity that it will be instantly understood by the half-educated? Is your product so described that some one who has never heard of it will grasp at once what it is, and what it is used for? Are the reasons advanced in its favour so compelling in their completeness that they will persuade people who are well-to-do and also people who must save shillings to make both ends meet? Are they such reasons that the indifferent cannot pass them by? Will they make enthusiasts of the sceptical? All these varying types are numbered amongst the readers of a great newspaper, and your message must not leave any of them unconvinced.

Do your advertisements make that appeal, or do they only announce that your goods are for sale? The bulk of the circulation of a newspaper consists of the humbly educated, the unimaginative, the indifferent, the irresolute, the mediocre, the thick-headed. No use "announcing" to these; they must be *interrupted* in their humdrum lives. Somehow you must penetrate their thoughts, see things as they see them. They know nothing about the refinements of advertising technique. Hand-drawn lettering, drop initials, the newest type faces—what do these mean to the wife of an underpaid clerk, who gets two pounds a

week to run the house and feed herself and her husband and the children, and who is continually darning and mending and scrimping and wondering where the money for Jimmy's new shoes is coming from? The thing that matters is what your advertising says to that frail, sad-eyed little woman in a Peckham by-street, where all the houses have geraniums in the front window, and are not even semi-detached. She is your market: she and thousands like her! Does your advertising speak to her so that she has to pause in her endless, monotonous round to listen?

Take almost any individual advertisement, and read it, and you will be obliged to admit that it cannot possibly make any measurable impression on the minds of the hurrying, worried, tax-burdened people to whom it is addressed.

Stand for twenty minutes, at six o'clock any evening, at Liverpool Street Station, or anywhere where large crowds of ordinary, middle-class people are flowing, and look closely into the hundreds of faces you will see. Read those faces—the degree of intelligence they reveal, their sadness, their hopefulness, their pessimism, their courage; the signs of struggle, conquest, failure, fear, eagerness, resignation, illusion and disillusion, which are lined on those faces, some young, some middle-aged, some old, some pretty, some mean, some generous—do this, I say,

before you start to write your copy. And after you have written your copy, recall those faces as you read it. The words which are going to appeal to the instincts, convince the minds, or move the hearts of these multitudes of people, must be magic words indeed.

CHAPTER IX

COUPONS: AND A NEW USE FOR THEM

WHENEVER an advertisement is seeking to procure direct replies, whether for a booklet, sample, information, and so forth, the inclusion of a coupon will enlarge the number of replies procured.¹ For all practical purposes there is no exception to this. Even advertisements in a business or technical periodical may usefully include a coupon. There is a perfectly good reason for this, and it will be explained presently; it has only a little to do with the time-saving convenience of a coupon.

A really important point to bear in mind when using coupons is to make perfectly sure that the copy sells the goods themselves—not the coupon or the free offer, whatever it may be. If you set out to concentrate attention on the coupon or on the offer, you will not get nearly so many replies as you will if you set out to sell the goods. It is the goods that you want to sell, not the free offer. You want people to write for the sample *because* they are anxious to try the goods, *not* because there is something to be had for nothing.

¹ I have never known a coupon to produce less than double the replies. Frequently it multiplies replies five times.

This is sufficiently obvious. The fact is that, if you do emphasise the "something for nothing" aspect of the thing, the replies fall off. This is a complete answer to the man who objects to coupons on the ground that there are professional coupon snippers on the look out for free samples. Of course there are some people like this. But they are not worth considering. Ten per cent. of the total replies would be a high proportion to find. It is silly to let such a minority deprive you of a very effective copy plan.

Of course the reason why copy fails to pull if it concentrates on the free offer is simple enough: you have forgotten to make the goods themselves appear worth buying. You *must* sell the goods, otherwise who wants a sample of them? If the goods do not appear to be good value, only a fool wants to sample them, even if the sample costs nothing but a few pence and a little trouble.

Hence the principal headline may well avoid mention of the sample. Sell the goods first, then introduce the coupon as an easy way to get them. Similarly, the best place for the coupon is at the foot of the advertisement. It is easy to cut out here, and this is the logical place for it. It should be separated from the text by a rule of some kind, and even the design of this rule may affect the number of replies. A dot-and-dash rule, of about

two-point weight, seems to be the best. A picture of a pair of scissors snipping the coupon may also help, or a finger and thumb tearing the paper. If a sample package or booklet is being offered, a picture of a hand holding out the thing offered also increases the replies.

Coupons are better if of a practical size large enough to accommodate average handwriting; but it will be seen in a moment that size is not of paramount importance. Even a coupon really too small for actual use is better than none.

Now, let it be understood clearly that the effectiveness of coupons as described is not a matter of opinion. It is a matter of record. There is no room for argument because actual, recorded results from many and varied campaigns prove what has been written above. These are facts. Interpretation of the facts is another matter. But there is, I think, clear enough evidence why coupons produce the effects described.

It is known that copy, with a coupon, produces larger results than the *same* copy without a coupon, all other things being as equal as persistent tests can make them. Now, why? Is this because the coupon saves trouble? Partly, without doubt. The coupon may save the trouble of a written letter. It saves thought by providing a

form of words ready to use. This theory is partly upset, however, by the fact that in magazine advertisements coupons are largely discarded in favour of post cards. People do not like to mutilate a magazine which may be passed from hand to hand (as distinct from a newspaper, the life of which is brief);¹ so they use post cards instead. Proportionately, magazine replies always contain more post cards than newspaper replies. This being so, there must be something about a coupon quite distinct from the trouble-saving aspect. Trouble-saving is part of the secret, but only part. What is the rest of it?

To discover this we must look at the thing solely from the point of view of the average reader. Putting trouble-saving aside altogether, what else is there about a coupon which so acts upon the reader's mind that he does what we want him to do more often when a coupon is used than when no coupon is used? Bear in mind what was said about the necessity to convince the reader about the value of the goods. Your copy has done this, now comes the coupon. The coupon, I suggest, puts into the reader's mind as nothing else does, the idea that *you expect*

¹ It should be mentioned that this has little or nothing to do with the comparative pulling power of newspapers as against magazines as advertisement media.

him to reply. He doesn't have to remember anything. He doesn't need to call at a shop and ask for anything. The coupon tells him to act now. It tells him he is expected to act now. And he responds to that evident expectation. When the same copy exactly merely *tells* him to reply, he sometimes fails to do so. When the same copy not only tells him but includes a coupon making it plain that he is definitely expected to do as told, he responds.

Examination of the evidence does not seem to provide any other explanation than this one. And as the explanation is not only backed up by results again and again, but is also perfectly reasonable, I think it is probably the right explanation.

If it is right, then coupons could be put to a new use to which, so far as I know, they never have been put.

Coupons are used now always for procuring direct results from the public to the manufacturer's own office. True, coupons have been used as a kind of voucher to be presented to a shopkeeper in return for a free sample, and when so used have sometimes produced astonishingly large results. This is not quite what is referred to above.

Why should not a manufacturer of a household article—custard-powder, for example—use

coupons as a reminder of the custard-powder advertised? Obviously an advertisement of a custard-powder sold by grocers must not only convince the reader of the merit of the custard-powder, it must also impress the name on her mind so that next time she wants custard-powder she will remember the name. She may have a week to forget it in.

Now, if coupons do make people feel that they are *expected* to act in a particular way, why not include a coupon in the advertisements? The copy would read like this, at the end, after selling the powder: "Cut out the coupon below and put it in your handbag. Then, next time you go shopping, it will remind you that you need some custard-powder, and it will remind you of the reasons why Blank's Custard-Powder is well worth trying."

Any ordinary couponless advertisement should put this idea into the reader's mind. But an actual coupon would have the effect of impressing on the reader's mind that she really was expected to remember the name of the powder. The ordinary advertisement would, by implication, suggest that it would be worth while to remember it, or might ask her to remember it in so many words. But a coupon would make it plain that the manufacturer really did expect her to do as he suggested. It does not matter

whether any number of coupons would be actually cut out. It is the powerful suggestion of the coupon, this suggestion of a clear course of action which the reader is expected to take, that matters.

CHAPTER X

THE COPYWRITER'S RELATIONS WITH HIS EMPLOYER, AND HIS EMPLOYER'S RELATIONS WITH HIS CLIENT

How far is the professional copywriter responsible for what he writes? In my opinion he should be prepared to accept full responsibility. More: he should insist upon assuming such responsibility in order to protect his own freedom.

Commonly, there are two ways of regarding the work of the copywriter. One school of opinion inclines to the view that the copywriter stands in much the same position as a barrister. Some degree of similarity between his work and that of an advocate gives plausibility to this view. Briefly the argument is this. A copywriter naturally works largely upon instructions from his client, the manufacturer. From him he receives a kind of brief. Usually this brief will be received orally from the manufacturer. The manufacturer's technical staff, even his foremen and workmen, may contribute to the copywriter's knowledge of the case in hand before work is started. Many copywriters, having questioned the manufacturer and his staff, and having seen the manufacturing processes which may be involved,

returns to his desk and commits to writing the facts he has thus collected. These facts constitute the brief from which he will work. They will be the basis of his copy; the facts will be interpreted and woven into his copy in his own skilled and characteristic way later on.

Now one school of opinion asserts that, having received this brief, the copywriter "writes" to it as a barrister speaks. He makes out the very best case he can, ignoring every fact which does not help his case, interpreting every fact he does use to the utmost advantage, and ignoring, in this interpretation, any point of view of those facts which would hinder his case. And the argument proceeds to assert that since the copywriter is paid (virtually) by the client who supplies the brief, his whole duty is to him alone, and the copywriter is not responsible in any way for what he writes. He is a paid servant. He is absolved from responsibility. The whole responsibility belongs to the client.

Now I think this is fatally wrong from every standpoint, particularly perhaps from that of the copywriter, however superficially convenient it may appear to him.

The comparison to a barrister seems to me to be untenable. For this reason: when a barrister presents a case in court, interpreting his facts to the advantage of his client, that interpretation

is often one counsel's argument on a point of law. Even when it is not, but is merely an ingenious version of a point of fact, he makes his case before a learned judge (who won't be easy to bamboozle, being up to all counsel's tricks himself), and he makes his case, knowing that counsel on the opposite side will tear his submissions to pieces by equally ingenious interpretations of his own. Even though a jury's duty is to find on the facts, the judge, in summing up, will expose the arguments of both sides for what they are worth.

The case presented in an advertisement is subject to no such examination by a skilled sifter of evidence. It is not exposed and re-interpreted from another point of view by opposing counsel—it being an axiom that you don't knock a competitor's copy.

Consequently an advertisement "case" is submitted to a jury alone. So the comparison vanishes.

The opposite school of opinion (as I think, the right one) holds that a copywriter is fully responsible for all he says. He must be prepared to stand by his copy. Certainly he does work to a brief compiled by himself from the facts given by his client. He is entitled to, and must, interpret his facts in the most skilful way at his command. But he should reject any fact which is not

true, and he should refuse to interpret a fact in a deceptive way. He should assume responsibility in order to protect his own freedom and in order to be able to protest against any inclination the client may have to deceive the public. If he is misled by his client, he may then justifiably assert his own rights and refuse to work longer for his client if he feels that such a course is really demanded of his conscience. He should decline to be regarded as a paid servant. He is master of his own pen and of his own art. For the actual writing of advertisement copy is undoubtedly an art. It is an art because a great deal of the writer's own character goes into it. It is an art because it expresses the writer's emotion. Even the poorest kind of copy, that kind which is merely a rehash of some one else's work, is art, because in the re-writing skill for its own sake will be employed. The writer will contrive to make the dull job of hashing up old stuff interesting by doing it as well as he can and by introducing skill of his own simply for the sake of doing the job well.

The best kind of copy—that which is written from direct observation and experience and enthusiasm—is unquestionably art.

Enthusiasm is one of the most precious emotions any one can possess. It is certainly essential to good copy. Even from a cynical and

self-interested point of view, then, it is worth while to preserve a copywriter's enthusiasm.

Therefore, apart from the cruelty of it, it is incredibly silly to compel a copywriter to write about a thing in which he cannot bring himself to believe. Yet this folly is committed. In such conditions many men will do their conscientious best out of a sense of duty. But there will be no heart in their work; it will have no genuineness in it, and it will have been written in despair. Every time a copywriter is forced to work in such a way, an injury is inflicted. No one has any right to inflict such an injury. If it is persisted in, the victim of it must become a cynic. He will end by believing that truth as he sees it cannot prevail in advertising. His conception of his work will be ruined.

Will it be contended at this point that copywriting is not an art at all, but common sense? For argument's sake let this contention stand. Let it be admitted, for the moment, that copywriting is not an art. It cannot be denied that a copywriter possesses a conscience.

Every copywriter with anything in him ought to feel that he owes responsibility to his public. His daily work consists of collecting information about merchandise which it is his task to present to the public in an attractive, persuasive, convincing form. He *must* feel a responsibility in

this work: he is lacking in character, and his copy will lack character, if he does not. Equally there must come a time when he has an article to describe which he feels he cannot conscientiously recommend. Look at it how you will, a copywriter must possess a sense of being in touch with his readers. Every day he has to put himself in the place of those readers in order to write to them the message which will influence them. This sense of touch ought to be encouraged in every possible way. The more it can be developed, the better his copy will be. It cannot be developed without his conscience, his sense of responsibility, being developed too. If it is insisted that he shall write copy for an article in which he does not believe, that sense of responsibility is undermined. It is folly from every point of view to allow this to happen since it prevents anything approaching the best to be got out of a man.

It has to be said that advertisement copy must present a one-sided view of a case. To that extent, "Truth in Advertising" is an ideal that can never be realised, even supposing that any one can be found clever enough to define truth. "Honesty in Advertising" is a far better aim. Honesty is easier to define, and honesty in advertising is perfectly attainable.

A copywriter's plain duty is to interpret and

present his facts with all the skill and art of which he is capable. He must use every device he knows to make his facts attractive, interesting, and convincing. And at the end of it all, I say, his case must be a one-sided case. Deception is, of course, unthinkable. The facts must be accurate. The interpretation must be fair. There must be no sophistry. There must be art, but no artfulness. He must not let his enthusiasm blind him. Let his case be as good and as complete as possible. But it must be perfectly straightforward. It must not appear to say one thing when another thing is the actual fact.

The ethics of description are always a little involved, and a very human scene bearing on this appears in Marryat's *Jacob Faithful*,¹ when there is a conference between some simple-minded and intensely honest folk—namely, old Tom Beazeley, his wife, his son, young Tom, and the staid and rather painfully correct Jacob, the colourless hero of a vigorously coloured story. Old Tom, an old naval man of the early nineteenth century, wishes to retire from work on the river, and he says :

“ . . . I've an idea that I can do a good bit of work in patching up boats ; for, you see, I always was a bit of a carpenter, and I know how the builders extortionate the

¹ Chapter xxxiii.

poor watermen when there's a trifle amiss. Now, if they knew I could do it, they'd all come to me fast enough ; but then there's a puzzle ; I've been thinking this week how I can make them know it. I can't put out a board and say, “ Beazeley, *Boat-Builder*,” because I'm no boat-builder, but still I want a sign.”

Presently young Tom sums up matters :

“ ‘ Why, then, father, it seems that you're no boat-builder, but you want people to fancy that you are—a'n't that the question ? ’

“ ‘ Why, 'tis something like it, Tom, but I do nobody no harm.’

“ ‘ Certainly not ; it's only the boats which will suffer. Now, get a large board, with “ Boats *built to order*, and boats repaired, by Tom Beazeley.” You know if any man is fool enough to order a boat, that's his concern ; you didn't say you're a boat-builder, although you have no objection to try your hand.’

“ ‘ What do you say, Jacob ? ’ said old Tom, appealing to me.

“ ‘ I think that Tom has given very good advice, and I would follow it.’ ”

This is nearer the wind than any copywriter ought to sail ! Advertisement history provides a similar example. A concern selling tinned salmon had encountered great difficulty in making sales

in a particular area in Canada. The competitor held the field. It appeared that a preference existed for red salmon, whereas the concern in question sold a pale-coloured variety. The solution to the trouble was found when a copywriter hit on the idea of advertising that "This salmon keeps well; it does not turn red in the tin." Clever, undoubtedly; but unscrupulous, it is to be feared. The straightforward way would have been to explain the advantages (there must have been some) of pale-coloured salmon. The method adopted was true, obviously: but was it honest?

The professional copywriter has an exceedingly difficult kind of work to do and, for the most part, receives small recognition of the fact. Nearly all manufacturers think copywriting to be easy. They even think the much larger business operation of advertising to be easy, and eagerly seek, and are influenced by, untrained opinion upon it. The readiness with which they do this is quite astonishing. Most manufacturers believe, further, that anybody can write an advertisement, particularly themselves.¹ It is difficult to get them to

¹ The temptation to seize a pen appears irresistible. Painting, sculpture, and the other arts are more fortunate. People do not grasp a chisel to hack at the work of a sculptor. It is a pity that many business men are so unbusiness-like that they will not leave the work of specialists to the very specialists whom they pay highly to do it. As H. L. Mencken has observed: "The curse of all

understand that copywriting is a difficult art, calling for long experience and unusual qualifications. The fact is that the men who write copy for the well-equipped, progressive advertising agencies have, in course of the progress of advertising, left the average manufacturer far behind. There is nothing surprising in this. Since advertising is the specialised study of advertising agents (where it is only a part of the business of a manufacturer), it is natural enough that the specialists who have come into contact with exceedingly varied selling conditions should have greater knowledge and skill in the technique of advertisement writing and display, keener insight into the public mind, and a better equipment for the preparation of telling advertisements than manufacturers.

Especially in the department of copywriting, advertising agencies excel. It is astonishing that agents, who are fully aware of this, do so little to impress the fact upon manufacturers. When a whole scheme of advertisement copy has been produced by skilled men, it only needs a manufacturer to say, for no reason which he can

the arts is the fact that they are constantly invaded by persons who are not artists at all—persons whose yearning to express their ideas is unaccompanied by the slightest capacity for charming expression—in brief, persons with absolutely nothing to say. This is particularly true of the art of letters, which interposes very few technical obstacles to the vanity and garrulity of such invaders."

explain, that he doesn't like it, for the average agent to pocket his scheme and his pride and produce an entirely fresh campaign.

This is a commonplace of agency experience. Are there any excuses for it?

One reason for the disparagement of agency copy by manufacturers is the silly tradition that agency copy is not charged for. It is something for nothing, and, not unnaturally, it is held in that estimation. There is no real reason why an agency client should be charged for the work of a draughtsman and should be given free the work of a copywriter. But just as the silly evil of the agency commission system seems to have become a tradition, so has free advertisement copy become a tradition. It may be that circumstances will force a departure from this custom where they do not look like forcing an abandonment of the commission evil.

The fact remains that in this department of copy, agencies have left many manufacturers a long way behind. In originality of idea, in execution, in typography and illustration, agency copy is far and away better than most manufacturers are capable of producing for themselves. In its way this is a triumph for the specialist. It is also sometimes a calamity, not for the copywriter and the agency, but for manufacturers.

A great deal of study, specialised skill, and

much keenly felt craftsmanship are devoted by the copywriter to his work. Far more thought is given, far more labour is bestowed, and far more affection is lavished upon his work by the copywriter than the average manufacturer ever dreams of. A copywriter devotes the best years of his life to the perfection of this one task. And to master it he has to combine an artist's conscientiousness with common sense and commercial sense. It takes an educated man some years to become a competent copywriter.

It is mainly such men who produce agency copy. And when a piece of this work has been written and rewritten and written again by the copywriter, it is still not finished. It then goes before a copy manager or director who, because he is an older hand, and possesses a ripper judgment than his staff, perceives its minor imperfections and gives it the final strength and polish.

Now the result of this combined work of specialists is advertisement copy as nearly fit for its purpose as considerable skill and mature judgment can achieve.

What happens to this work?

There are exceptions, as there must always be; but very frequently this work goes for criticism before a manufacturer who is utterly incompetent to form a sensible estimate of its worth. Written with literary skill, it is judged by a man

ignorant of the use of words, and with little conscience or feeling in their employment.

Competent copy cannot be written except by men who have read lovingly, who have a sense of the romance of words, and of the picturesque and the dramatic phrase; who have versatility enough and judgment enough to know how and when to write plainly, pungently, or with a certain affectation; who have a sense of the aptness and directness of words and constructions. Briefly, competent copy is a matter not only of literary skill of a rather high order, but also skill of a particular, specialised kind, which, though it is specialised, must be extraordinarily versatile.

And this work is often passed upon, criticised, and mutilated by a manufacturer who is ill-read, who knows little of the use of words or the construction of sentences, who has no literary sense and small appreciation of style.

Thus good work is converted into poor. The rhythm of sentences is upset. Original, economically written copy has its effectiveness removed, its originality of idea or treatment destroyed, its economy made verbose. The manufacturer "feels" that he wants this or that altered. He does not know why, he cannot explain why, he cannot alter intelligently. In his opinion the copy "lacks punch." His opinion is worth little, but he pays the paper and is entitled to spoil the

tune (as a copywriter has aptly observed). And agents more often than not tamely submit to this conceit. And not infrequently the agents get exactly what they deserve. At the conclusion of the campaign they are told, with no opportunity for discussion, that the advertising which they prepared has proved ineffective, and the manufacturer has decided to change his agent.¹ The fact is, of course, that the advertisements the agents prepared never appeared. Their scheme was mutilated beyond recognition before ever it was used. It failed to pull because the manufacturer ruined it. But that can hardly be pointed out usefully when the change-over has been decided.

Now this whole question is a problem of importance in agency relations. Agencies generally are producing to-day advertisements which are often in advance, in thought and in execution, of what their clients are ready to employ. The copy and layout specialists have gone further ahead than manufacturers. There are schemes of Press advertisements, and designs for posters, and the like, lying buried in agencies and studios, because manufacturers could not appreciate their value, which are more striking and more effective

¹ It is usually the copy that is blamed. Few manufacturers understand that successful advertising depends upon an organised marketing scheme.

than any which have appeared for these same clients. They are unused, not because they are incompetent, but because the manufacturers who rejected them were incompetent to judge them. The advertising men who originated them know their value. Left alone, they would have backed their judgment and used them. But a narrow-visioned manufacturer intervened, and the advertising men had not the courage of their convictions.

Advertisements have made great strides in the past thirty years. But the advertisements which agencies could produce if they were given a freer hand than their relations with clients now permit, or if they had greater courage collectively, and were less fearful of competition, would give advertising a new power.

This condition is a calamity, because advertising is being held in check partly by present agency relations, and partly by the fact that so many manufacturers are behind the agencies in thought.

It is an important problem, because such a condition is hardly tolerable.

Agencies ought not to acquiesce in it. And as the process of development continues they will be less and less willing to acquiesce in it.

Is there any solution? The first that occurs (though it may not be the most hopeful) is a more

courageous attitude on the part of agencies. They ought to be less ready to withdraw one scheme and substitute another merely because a client is spending a lot of money and they don't want to lose him. They ought to realise that it would be for the good of the agency business generally (and therefore for themselves) to tell a client plainly that if the work they have done as specialists and submitted as representing their considered judgment is not acceptable, the client must seek other advice. If all agencies would do this, the whole agency business would quickly be placed upon a higher plane and would be accorded far greater respect than it is now.

Another solution would be the abolition of the illogical commission system and of all speculative or free work. Manufacturers would speedily appreciate and bestow respect upon work if they had to pay for it in money instead of getting it for nothing or through a system which, though it is known to represent 10 per cent. of the appropriation, is, in effect, more or less a concealed commission because it is merely deducted.

A third solution, and probably the most practicable, is a steady process of educating manufacturers to the real function of agencies. That function is to conduct advertising on behalf of their clients. It should be an executive function.

Manufacturers should be brought to understand that an "advertiser" is a man who plans and executes advertising. It has been most sensibly suggested¹ that a manufacturer who employs contractors to build a factory is not a "builder"; a manufacturer who employs professional advice to conduct a lawsuit is not a "lawyer"; a manufacturer who seeks the advice of a bank is not a "banker." And the manufacturer who employs an agent to plan and conduct an advertising campaign is wrongly called an "advertiser." He is a manufacturer who "advertises"—as he is a manufacturer who "builds" or "banks."

The preparation of advertisements is, I repeat, an executive function. The manufacturer's sphere is plain enough. He is right to object to a statement in an advertisement which is inadvertently inaccurate or in conflict with his business policy. He ought and must correct exaggeration unwittingly introduced. He alone can correct a technical error of description. But the *manner* of presentation, provided it does not offend in any of the above, is, or should be, solely the function of the agent, because this is a question of advertising technique in which the agent is his superior. The manufacturer would not interfere in a question of building stresses, or in counsel's

¹ By Mr. Sinclair Wood in a speech before The Business Research Association of Great Britain.

method of presenting a case to judge and jury. Neither should he interfere with an agency's method of presenting his case to the public.

Amongst the more conscientious agencies this point of view is already gaining ground. A sense of professional responsibility is growing which makes them increasingly unwilling to have skilled work rejected with small respect by manufacturers who do not appreciate its value and the immense labour entailed. These agencies are weakened in their attitude by the knowledge that if they stand by their professional recommendations competitors less conscientious than themselves, and more concerned with commissions, will desert their principles and let the client have his way. But this cannot go on indefinitely unless advertising is to stand still until manufacturers catch up with the specialists.

CHAPTER XI

WHO SHOULD BECOME AN ADVERTISE- MENT WRITER ?

THE average business man's attitude towards advertisement copy is curiously paradoxical. The same man will often tell you almost in a breath that copy is the most important factor in advertising : that effective copy is a matter of clever catch-phrases ; and that almost any one can write copy.

Now the copy is certainly the most important thing in an advertisement. But as has been laboured at length already, advertisements are only a small part of the machinery of an advertising campaign. That is why the term marketing is preferable to advertising.

But if copy is the most important part of advertising, how can it be held that copy is easy to write ? And how can mere catch-phrases be called important ? The statements above contradict one another : yet I believe them to be free from exaggeration as set out. The notion that effective copy depends upon catch-phrases hardly needs real consideration. A catch-phrase cannot expound, or reason, or educate, or stir the emotions at all seriously. Certainly it cannot carry deep conviction into people's minds nor

rouse them to action. To be successful, advertisement copy must definitely influence, sometimes actually create, public opinion. Merchandise cannot be sold without exposition of its merits, or reasoning as to its value, or education as to its usefulness ; it cannot be sold without conviction of its worth being implanted in people's minds and without the reasoning or emotional faculties being stirred sufficiently for action to be the outcome. When this is realised the comparative ineffectiveness of catch-phrases becomes obvious.

A more serious misconception about the work of the copywriter than that just discussed, and one very widely met, is the belief that copywriting is simply writing—that any competent journalist or author can write effective advertisements. This is not true : it is manifestly not true. If it were true, if any competent journalist could write effective advertisements, no publisher could be found for a book on advertisement writing. If it were true, there would be no separate branch of the advertising business devoted especially to this one subject. If it were true, good copywriters would be easily found, whereas they are, in fact, very hard indeed to find. If it were true, copywriters would not command high salaries, and they do. Lastly, if it were true, it would only be necessary for a journalist to be set at work for effective advertisement copy to be obtained.

Whereas no journalist can write effective copy without training. He can write copy of a kind. As almost any one can pick out a tune on a piano. But he cannot write effective copy. Let a journalist and a skilled copywriter be set to write copy to fill a full-page newspaper advertisement for the same article after identical instruction as to the facts to be presented—and observe the difference in the copy produced. There will no longer be any doubt whether copywriting demands special skill.

It is even questionable whether journalistic knowledge is desirable *before* a man takes up advertisement writing. Skill in the use of words is valuable. Such a man may have less to learn of the art of writing, and may therefore acquire the specialised art of copywriting more easily. But there are other qualities which the copywriter needs to possess beyond skill in actual writing. Just as a dramatist is not called a playwright but a playwright ("workman"), so a copywriter might appropriately be called a copywright.

As the chapter on the forms of copy and the right illustration showed, a copywriter needs to acquire a knowledge not only of the many different forms that copy can assume, but also he needs to have a sense of display. This is something quite distinct from actual writing. It calls for a sense of balance and arrangement.

Copy which is just good straightforward description is often difficult to arrange in the form of a layout. Competent copy is easy to lay out.

Thus a man who intends to take up copywriting must have more than what editors call "a nose for news." He must certainly have that. But he must also have a keen commercial sense, a selling sense. He must be interested in selling merchandise, and quick to see the kind of argument that has salesmanship in it. He must be as interested in people and in things as Arnold Bennett. And he must have the insatiable curiosity of the "elephant's child"! Copywriting can be learned; but this attitude of mind cannot be taught.

In addition to this a copywriter must be able to introduce into his writing a note of authority and "knowledgeableness." He will, in the course of his work, often have to visit factories to see manufacturing processes. He must be able to grasp what are the essential, usable, selling points to be made out of such processes. Sometimes it will not be an actual process, or detail in a process, which provides the strong selling argument. It may be some practice in the factory quite apart from actual manufacture. He must get at such facts by questioning his client and his client's foremen and workmen. And he must be alive all the time to discover some such detail which

has something picturesque or dramatic or unusual about it which will make good copy. Of course the selection of such selling points demands experience. The untrained man will miss the really striking fact which, to a trained man, appears obvious. But training alone cannot give a man this aptitude. He must have an active brain and a quick eye to begin with. The note of authority referred to above is best explained by comparison. Rudyard Kipling's writings possess it in the *n*th degree. In his Mulvaney, Ortheris, and Learoyd stories he writes as though he had been in the Army all his life. In the stories of Mr. Pycroft, "A Fleet in Being" and "Sea Warfare," he writes as though born and bred in the Navy. Others of his stories seem to be the work of a man with no interest in life beyond that of a ship's engine-room — his tales of Scottish marine engineers, for instance, and "The Ship that Found Herself." In "007," he writes as though he had seldom set foot outside an engine-yard. For all I know, the technical details of all these stories and of others like "Slaves of the Lamp" (Part II.), "In the Presence," and so on, may be hopelessly wrong. The point is that they don't sound wrong. One may have great personal dislike of Kipling's point of view and occasionally find his literary style distasteful. But he does write as though he

knew his subject. And he has written on so many subjects that he cannot possibly have more than a smattering of some of them. This quality must be present in copy, and it does not depend upon mere writing. It depends upon the brain of the writer, upon his power of observation, on his receptiveness, and on his aptitude for selection from the material available.

Beyond these qualities an intending copywriter must, of course, be able to think clearly so that he can marshal his arguments forcibly. He must be able to think and write logically. He must be able to distrust his own personal prejudices and reject them if need be. He must feel a sense of being in touch with the public he addresses. And for this reason I would prefer a man experienced in public speaking before one experienced in journalism, when selecting a man for training.

Of course an intending copywriter must be teachable. He will have a good deal to learn, and some of it will seem to be very simple at first. The more widely read he is, the better. Wide reading makes for style and allusiveness. It also makes for directness and economy. And never forget that copy is rooted in human nature.

And when a man has learned to produce good copy, is his work finished or his equipment complete? Not by any means.

He must have general business knowledge, particularly of retail conditions. And once his copy has been written he must be able to take his work and "sell" it to his client. He must be able to talk about it intelligently, explain his ideas about the product, and why he has taken some particular course in presenting his story to the public. He must understand advertising and marketing. He must have tact in the handling of a client. He must be able to get on with business men. He must be able to talk as an equal to men bigger than himself, and, more difficult, he must be able to talk persuasively to men smaller than himself. He needs to have a broad and tolerant outlook. He needs personal dignity.

At the present time there exists no place where training may be obtained as such in advertisement writing or in marketing, as subjects or as careers. Postal courses in advertising can teach a man little. At the end of such a course a man would have little more knowledge than a clerk in an advertising agency. Such courses cannot be recommended.

If you intend to take up advertisement writing, the best way to enter upon such a career is to obtain a position of some kind in an advertising agency or the advertising department of a large firm. And if you have previously sought some

experience behind a shop counter, and, if possible, some experience of selling goods on the road as a travelling salesman, so much the better. There are plenty of successful copywriters who have never sold goods from either side of a counter, but such experience is extremely valuable and would help you to get a position. After you have obtained a post you must watch for opportunities.

The salaries paid to successful copywriters are not large, as commercial and professional remuneration is reckoned in other fields. But a man with real ability will rise quickly by similar comparison.

And there is more than money to be earned.

You will have work to do which you can justly feel is social service of a very genuine kind. And you will have work which is exceedingly varied and intensely interesting. It is constantly changing. Every job presents some new problem and affords opportunities for originality and self-expression. There is no sameness and little drudgery. There is always something new to be learned. There are interesting facts to be acquired, interesting people to meet, new things to see and understand. You will not be a copywriter long without declaring advertisement writing to be work to be proud of.

A COPYWRITER'S BOOKSHELF

- Advertisers' Weekly.* (66 Shoe Lane, London, E.C.4.)
 Advertising and Advertisements. THOMAS RUSSELL.
 (Modern Business Institute.)
 Advertising and Progress. E. S. HOLE and JOHN HART.
 (Review of Reviews.)
 Advertising as a Business Force. PAUL T. CHERINGTON.
 (Pitman.)
Advertising World. (49 Wellington Street, London, W.C.2.)
 Art of the Poster. MCKNIGHT KAUFFER. (Cecil Palmer.)
 Art of the Printer. STANLEY MORRISON. (Ernest Benn.)
 Attainable Ideals in Newspaper Advertising. (*Chicago Tribune*.)
 Bellows' French Dictionary. (Hachette.)
 Billposting. CYRIL SHELDON. (Sheldons Ltd.)
 Business Organisation and Finance. JOHN P. MAY.
 (Modern Business Institute.)
 Chemical Dictionary. (Chemical Catalogue Co., New York.)
 Commercial Advertising. THOMAS RUSSELL. (Putnam.)
 Concise Oxford Dictionary. (Oxford Clarendon Press.)
 Constructive Merchandising. R. E. RAMSAY. (Appleton.)
 Dictionary of Modern English Usage. H. W. FOWLER.
 (Oxford Clarendon Press.)
 Dictionary of Quotations. WOOD. (Fred. Warne.)
 Dictionary of Similes. FRANK J. WILSTACK. (George Harrap.)
 Dramatic Opinions and Essays. GEORGE BERNARD SHAW.
 (Constable.)
 Economics. G. BINNEY DIBLEE. (Modern Business Institute.)
 Elements of Lettering. GOUDY. (John Lane.)
 Encyclopædia Britannica. (Cambridge University Press.)
 English Composition. JOHN NICHOL. (Macmillan.)

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- English Grammar. (RICHARD MORRIS.) (Macmillan.)
 Etymological Dictionary. SKEAT. (Oxford Clarendon Press.)
 Fiery Particles. C. E. MONTAGUE. (Chatto & Windus.)
 First Essays on Advertising. J. MURRAY ALLISON. (Cecil Palmer.)
 Forsyte Saga. JOHN GALSWORTHY. (Heinemann.)
 Forty Years an Advertising Agent. GEORGE P. ROWELL.
 (Franklin Publishing Co., New York.)
 Government Report on Stationery Office Printing, with appendix on legibility by LEGROS.
 Holy Bible.
 Illustration in Advertising. LIVINGSTONE LARNED.
 (McGraw-Hill.)
 Law of Advertisements. T. ARTEMUS JONES. (Butterworth.)
 Letters of a Self-Made Merchant to his Son. GEORGE HORACE LORIMER. (Methuen.)
 Macaulay's Political and Historical Essays. Two Volumes.
 Everyman Library. (J. M. Dent.)
 Making Advertisements and Making Them Pay. ROY S. DURSTINE. (Scribner, New York.)
Manchester Guardian Supplements: Advertising; Printing.
 Marketing and Merchandising. CECIL CHISHOLM.
 (Modern Business Institute.)
 Masters of Advertising Copy. Edited by J. GEORGE FREDERICK. (Frank-Maurice, New York.)
 My Life and Work. HENRY FORD. (Heinemann.)
 "Old Man Specific." Reprinted from *Printers' Ink*,
 Feb. 13, 1919, by Powers-House Co., Cleveland, Ohio.
 On the Art of Writing. Sir ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH.
 (Cambridge University Press.)
 Oxford Book of English Verse. (Oxford Clarendon Press.)
 Principles of Advertising. DANIEL STARCH. (A. W. SHAW.)

- Printers' Ink.* (185 Madison Avenue, New York.)
 Printing for Business. JOSEPH THORP. (John Hogg.)
 Psychology & Industrial Efficiency. HUGO MUNSTERBERG. (Houghton Mifflin.)
 Right Making. B. J. FLETCHER. (Design & Industries Association.)
 Roget's Thesaurus. (Longmans Green.)
 Salesmanship and Sales Management. JOHN G. JONES; and Business Correspondence. MAX RITTENBERG. In one Volume. (Modern Business Institute.)
 Scientific Advertising. CLAUD C. HOPKINS. (Lord & Thomas.)
 Shakespeare's Tragedies, Comedies, Histories, Poems, and Sonnets. Three Volumes. Everyman Library. (J. M. Dent.)
 Success in Retail Advertising. THOMAS RUSSELL. (Nisbet.)
 The King's English. H. W. & F. G. FOWLER. (Oxford Clarendon Press.)
The New Publicity. (Publicity Club of London, 112 New Oxford Street, W.1.)
The Times on Advertising.
 Things that Have Interested Me. ARNOLD BENNETT. (Chatto & Windus.)
 Thrasymachus. C. E. M. JOAD. To-day and To-morrow Series. (Kegan Paul.)
 Typography, First and Second Impressions. (Pelican Press.)
 Year Books of the Design and Industries Association. (Ernest Benn.)

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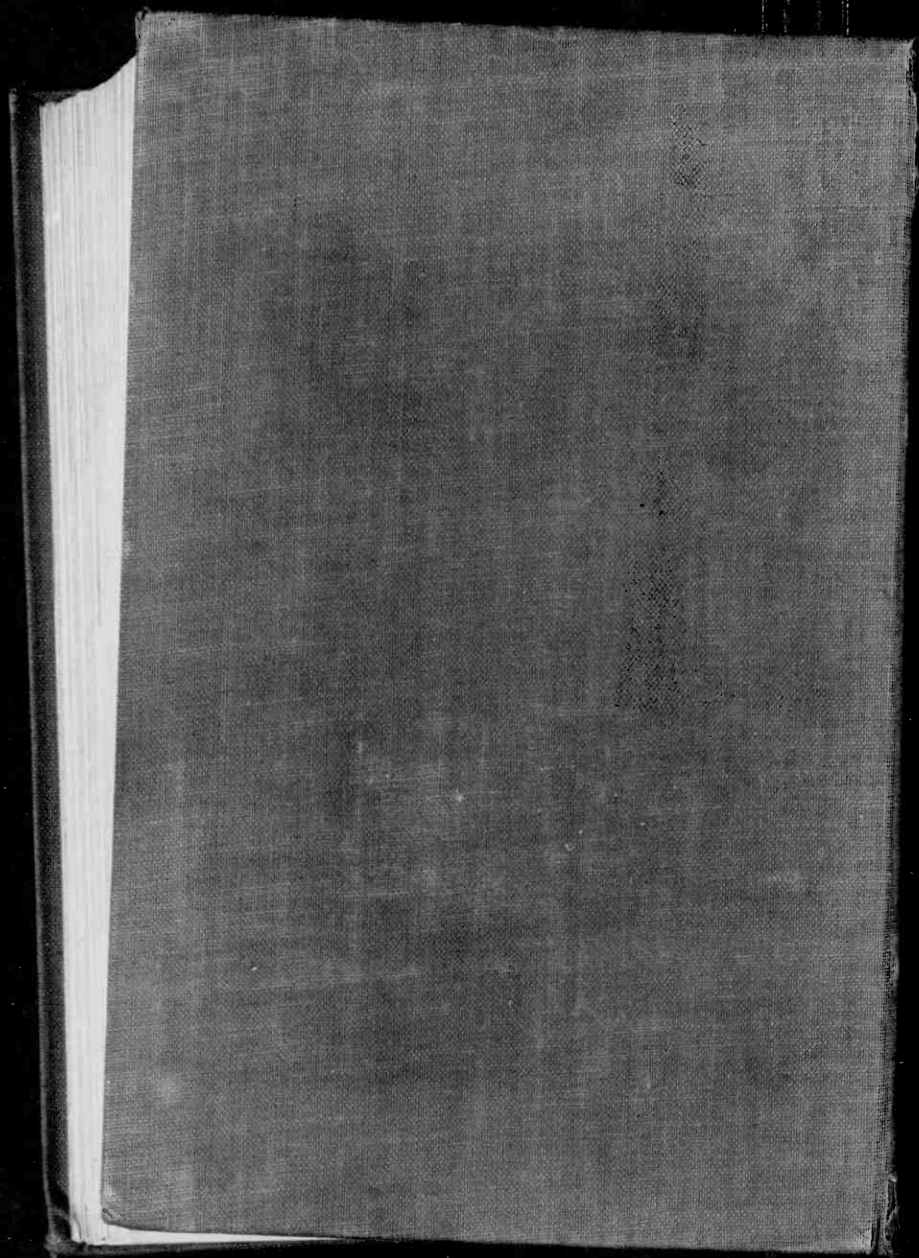
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